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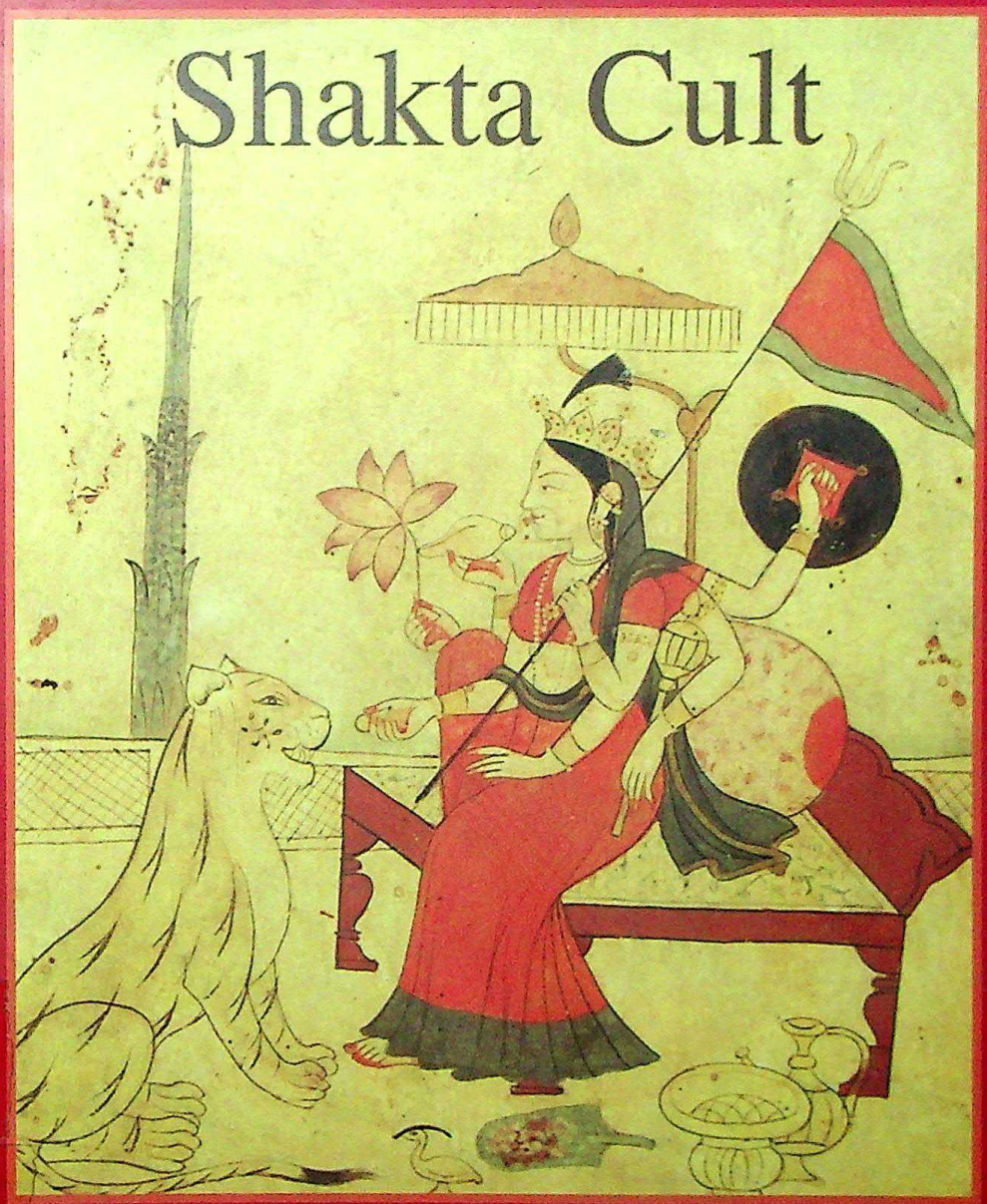
Pahari Miniature Painting

The Devi

Shakta Cult



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The Devi : Shakta Cult

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The Devi Mahatamya in pictorial detail in this volume is a study of Devi Shakti—the supreme feminine deity. She is Dashamahavidya of the Bhairavas, and also Katyayini, Kalaratri and Mahagauri. As Shiva's Adishakti, she is Gayatri, the goddess of all science and knowledge. She finds origin in Vedas as Gayatri mata. She is the supreme power of Markandeya Purana. She is mind and matter both. First known as Rudrapatni, she acquires the epithets of Arya, Bhagavati, Deva-Samskriti, Mahakali, Mahayogini and Manogama of our meditation and acquires her philosophical aspect. Upanishadas respect her as Uma Hemavati and Durga. She is benign, terrible, vigorous, generous and also amalgamated as Yogamaya of Vasudeva. As controller of the universe, she is the energy being the female principle of Maheshwara.

Pahari miniature paintings represent Indian spirit and are impulsive towards the transcendental and supenatural. Elaborate ornamentation, idealisation and naturalistic representation in line and colour bring these works closer to life. The mythological and historical scenes are related to unexpected glimpse of the figures in these miniatures leaving nothing to illusiveness because the artistic details give glimpses of a great cultural age. We find an air of greater naturalism because of the colours used symbolically. Pahari style of painting has a sense of reality, unique freedom of expression, cultural perspective and influence of local colour. Art in these miniatures is sensitive, reticent and tender. Self control, serenity, passion, delicacy and refinement enrich the delightful rhythms where music flows in each strain of colour in harmony of technique, subject and portrayal.

This volume for the first time, presents 36 handwritten pages of Markandeya Purana dated A.D. 1574-75 in addition to the paintings of Basohli, Chamba, Guler Kangra, Jammu and Kulu versions from 18th century to early 20th century from various museums and private collections in this unique collection in colours, lyrical and dramatic where the synthesis of various Pahari idioms appears in self consciously attempted paintings based on manuscripts.

Pahari paintings of Markandeya Purana sing the Devi Mahatamya in line and colour where imagination in refinement of reasoning is reality of our life.

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Price Rs 3000
$ 150

Front Cover Painting : Devi, Guler, Pahari, Early 18th Century
Back Cover Painting : Folio of Devi Mahatamya, Kangra, A.D. 1574-75

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Pahari Miniature Painting

The Devi Shakta Cult

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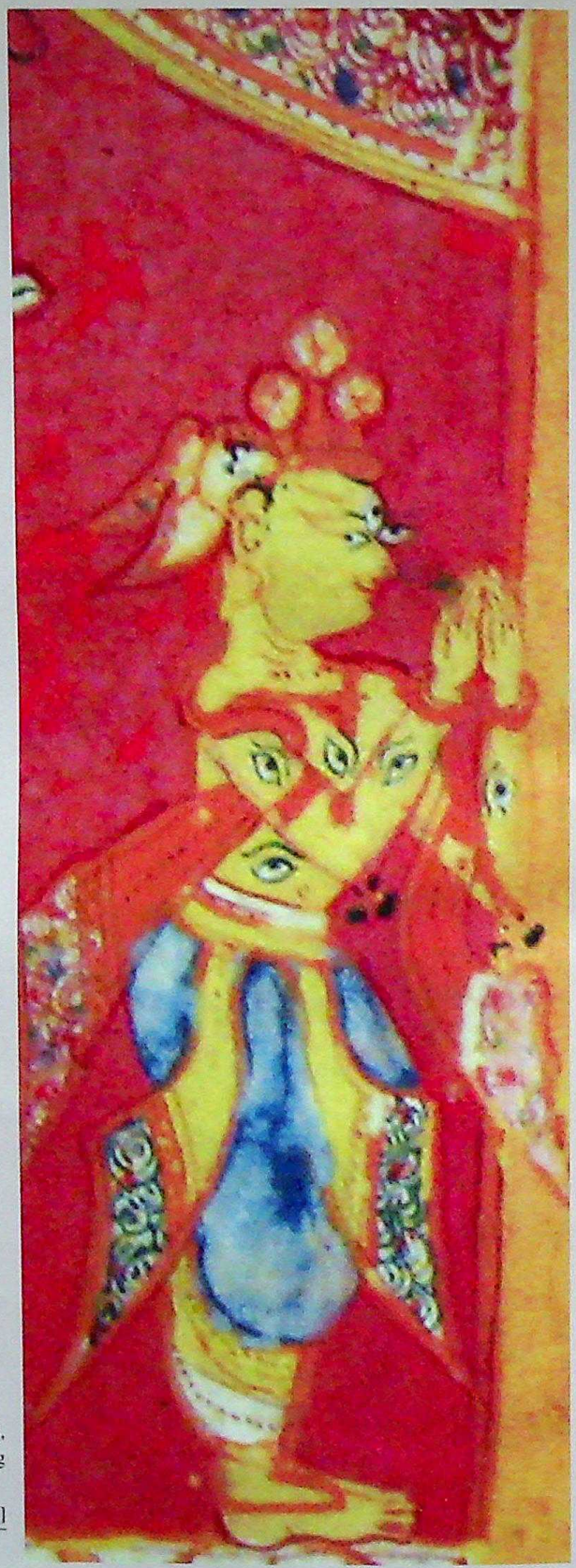

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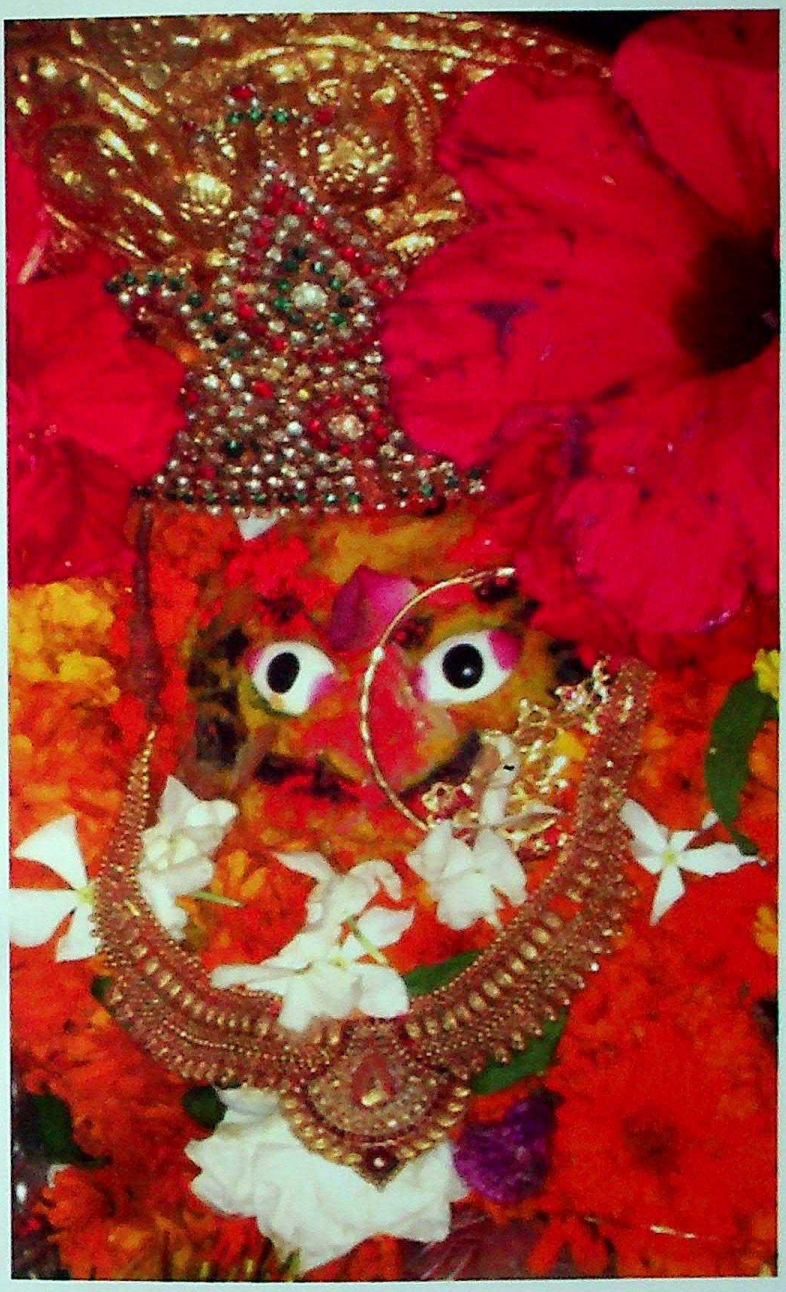
या देवी सर्वभूतेषु शक्तिरूपेण संस्थिता।
नमस्तस्यै। नमस्तस्यै। नमस्तस्यै नमोनमः॥



Dedicated to
Devi Bhadrakali of Bajreshvari Temple,
Nagarkot, Kangra

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Devi Tara, Kangra 19th century, Kangra Art Museum, Dharamsala

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Preface

Devi Durga in her various forms is the epitome of human imagination and for Pahari painters she is Shakti, a strength unsurpassed, which results in our experience of spirituality. For Hindus she is a mother, a wife, the powerful goddess, who represents life in its complete form. No wonder that her strength can bring a social change. Durga is volcanic energy for Pahari artists of Tantric goddess painting tradition whose mythological narrative is translated into colour evolving in us a feeling of love which takes us to higher level and out of our own limitations. Devi in our worship is mother, the goddess and each picture in this volume is authentic art. These paintings serve as an aesthetic function of illustrating Devi Mahatamya. The Devi, in her various avataras is metaphoric of human faith. She is the one who grants us well being and we beseech the auspicious mother for our general good and prosperity.

The goddess is mixed quite literally with the soil of India with 51 Shakti Peethas or power centres scattered all over the sub-continent. Her worship gives us all power of deep and true emotion. As Sati, the first conjugal manifestation of primordial power, she adores her husband Shiva. He is not the ideal match in the eyes of her parents; for she is a princess born to King Daksha. Shiva is awkward, frequently boorish and keeps a very low profile, just doing his duty, deeds at will and going where he pleases. Sati in love with Shiva knows the butter-hearted kindest husband as she follows her deepest feminine instincts. He, the Lord Shiva is not invited to a ritual of great sacrifice by Sati's father, and this causes hurt and fury to Sati and she plunges herself into the sacrificial fire and dies. Shiva on this sad news is so livid that he wrecks the celeberations and chops off Daksha's head. Crazed with grief he slings Sati's body over his shoulder and begins a Tandava dance of destruction. The celestials know that he will destroy the universe if he goes on, and they beg Lord Vishnu to stop him. No one dares go near the furious dancer in that state, hence Lord Vishnu resolutely sends his discus, the Sudarshana Chakara at Sati's corpse. Bit by bit the corpse gets chopped off, scattering into 51 pieces all over Bhartavarsha, before Shiva feels the weight gone from his shoulders and stops dancing. Knowing the fact Shiva retreats in deep meditation to an icy cave in the lofty Himalayas.

Meanwhile the universe draws a breath of relief and sets to work restoring itself. But now, earth has been given new power—the talisman of Devi's own body. As long as the mortals keep true faith with Devi's laws of loving kindness and sincerity, luck favours them. When they get cruel they invite their own doom. Devi Mahatamya of Markandeya Purana in Pahari art gives us this message in numerous pictures in different idoms.

Demon Mahisha performs such terrible and powerful tapasya that he gains the boon of immense strength, which he misuses using his power to enslave the Tribhuvana, the three worlds.

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To give an end to his wickedness, the Devi as Shakti is created by the gods who humbly offer their powers to their common creatrix. Devi comes in a form strong and glorious beyond description. In fact she is Sati, Lord Shiva's Consort, Parvati in new role. In philosophical meaning her fight with evil is the extinction of wickedness in the human ego.

In this pictorial volume of Devi Mahatamya, the glory of the goddess of Markandeya Purana, I have made an effort to present the pahari miniature paintings of different idioms alongwith 36 pages, handwritten complete Saptashati with illustrations from the original Markandeya Purana of the sixteenth century vintage painted in Kangra Valley's most inspiring and innovative style. Devi Mahatamya or Durgasaptashati is a living text and its recitation is one of India's oldest ticking traditions, never abandoned for even one season of Navaratari, in Hindu homes and temples and celeberated every six months in the hills and every autumn in other parts of India.

The most important find in Pahari manuscripts and miniature paintings appeared in 1977 when Himachal State Museum, Simla purchased a set of Mahatamya of Markandeya Purana from one Mr. Kailash Katoch of village Bijapur, in Kangra District of Himachal Pradesh. This set has 18 loose folios with inscriptions and paintings on both sides of each page, giving us in all 36 pages and 72 paintings. The size of each page is 26.5 × 11.4 c.m. with very dull yellow margins and the space has divisions in measured line and colour patterns. Each page has beautiful borders at the top and the bottom of the manuscript, decorated with motifs in the Shilpa Shashtra tradition. The size of each picture is 10.3×4.7 cms. The script is in horizontal format whereas there are vertical panels of paintings on both sides of the text. The verse in text has fifteen lines, 581 Shlokas divided in 13 Chapters. Each page normally has adjusted 15 Shlokas in fifteen lines. The number 700 in Saptshati is completed in Uvacha and other additions.

This manuscript has a Sanskrit colophon in the same hand in which the text is written calligraphically. Chhanda, meter used in Shlokas is Sardula Vikridita written at Jaya Singh Devanagar, (presently Jaisinghpur). The last page bears the name of Sribhuani Sharma the scholar-painter who has produced this valuable document. The manuscript was done in Samvata 1638 i.e. Gregorian Calendar year 1581, on a Thursday when there was full moon on a Purnima. Scholars have verified from the records that the details of the Thursday and full moon give different directions thus giving us proof to say that Falguna Purnima and available dates refer to the year AD 1574-75 only.

Folio 18 ends as," Sridevyai namah. Dribdhum yadrishi markandeya Sudhiya Sridevsantustaye mahatamyam vyalikat sudhi sumanasha Samsmritya Raman hridi Saka tvastagunarasenutulite mase tapayse subhe suksetre Jaya Singh deva nagre Shri Bhuanisarma drutam Puriniman Jiva Samapatam."

The Colophon gives Tvasta (अष्ट), guna (गुणा) Rasa (रसः) and Indu (इन्दु) indicating the year of Vikrami Samvata, when this work was completed. When we translate Ashta as Brahma, Lord occupying figure of 'one', Guna as 3, Rasa as 6 and Indu as one, we reach 1361. It is read as starting from right 1631 Vikrami Samvata, which is 57 years ahead of Gregorian Calendar year, thus 1631-57 = A.D. 1574-75. Ephemeris show Purnima (full moon) in Phalguna month on Thursday not in AD 1574 but only in A.D. 1552. There is a tradition of Kacha Samvata in the

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hills. There is some mistake in comparative calculation. The fact remains that this work was completed between the years A.D. 1552 to 1574-75. We accept Vikrami Samvata 1631. i.e. A.D. 1574-75 as the period of completion of this unique manuscript.

It matters little if we accept A.D. 1552 even. The inscription at the end of folio 18 which provides us proof of this work having been produced before the end of the 16th century relieves us of Mughal influences and gives us a span of 119 years before the appearance of Seu Pandit of Guler-Kangra idiom. Works between the years A.D. 1575 to AD 1720 need to be identified and a fresh approach by scholars is needed to distinguish colours as against their practice of stylistic approach and area of finding of paintings.

Decidedly, Devi in 1574-75 edition of Devi Mahatamya is in a very superior idiom and this licking colour touch style, we notice in certain early Guler works too which indicate that earlier the idioms have been used with variations.

Devi Mahatamya of Kangra shows the Devi in her various forms. In her manifest rupas, she is shown in her exploits in exalted manifestations, five-headed, ten-armed, and seated on shoulders of a four-armed figure. In most pictures she is riding her vahana, the tiger and not a lion as described in the original text, and is shown in golden body, four-armed. The Devas pay homage to her. She kills demons, beheads Mahishasura and bears a garland of human heads and a belt of human limbs. She makes demons flee. In her divine forms she is soft, feminine, benign object of adoration. We notice the visual and the subtle approach of the scholar-artist in each picture. In folio 7 we see Lord Indra empowering Devi with his Shakti. Visuals at places have touched abstraction which makes the pictures unique in subject and their quality of art work done in detail and subtlety of imagination.

I have included from Shakti Peetha Kangra's Durga temple (where the left breast and heart of the Devi lives) a picture of the Pindi, and a few carvings in silver and stone in rarest of the rare pictures, for the art lovers who will find these details as powerful as the living Devi, who is Shiva's Consort, the great Durga and Kali. In fact this is the only temple where original Devi of the Puranas as Bhadrakali lives.

My purpose is to present Devi in Pahari miniature paintings and to me these carvings hold great importance because the original text given in 36 pages was written and painted in Kangra, Nagarkot in 16th century.

I pay my tribute to all the painters whose treasures I have the honour to bring in print with the help of various museums of the world. But for the co-operation of my publishers, National Publishing House and its managing Director Shri S.K. Malik, this effort of mine would not have seen the light of the day, Thanks to him.

New Delhi

—Onkar Rahi

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I express my gratitude to all known and unknown scholars whose works have inspired me to devote myself to the cause of Pahari Miniature Painting. Also I, place on record my indebtedness to all the authors of various publications on Puranas and mythological works related to the Devi, the Shakta cult and the Tantric way of life in the Devi worship.

I gratefully acknowledge the help rendered to me by the Director, languages and culture Himachal Pradesh Government in allowing me access to the paintings in Himachal State Museum, Simla, Kangra Art Museum Dharamsala and Bhuri Singh Museum Chamba, where the curators and the staff have helped me in digging out the best from their strong-rooms.

I express my gratitude to National Museum, New Delhi, Bharat Kala Bhavan, Varanasi, Riet berg Museum, Zurich, and State Musuem and Art Gallery Chandigarh for providing me some rare paintings for publication.

I am thankful to Sarvashri Swarn Kumar Sharma, S.C. Uppal, Kumar Pranshu, Vijay Sharma, Umesh Chandra Sharma, Ram Prasad Sharma, Dr. V.N. Singh, Dr. Daljeet, Dr. Vijay Mathur, Dr. D.P. Singh and Dr. R.P. Singh for their whole hearted co-operation and help extended to me.

Works at Freer Gallery of Art, Boston, Smithsonion Institute, Krones collection, Asian Art Museum of San Franciso, Howard Hodgkin collection London, Dr. Alvin O. Bellak Collection London, Paul F. Water collection and other numerous sources need special mention because no study can ever be completed without reference to these collections. I gratefully acknowledge the courtesy shown to me by all the above mentioned friends and resources.

I thank my wife Uma who loves me for my love for art above everything else and has always encouraged me to go ahead with my challenging pursuits.

Mr. Surendra Kumar Malik. Managing Director, National Publishing House, New Delhi is a keen lover of art, I thank him for provoking and involving me fully and whole heartedly in consolidating Pahari Paintings.

—Author

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Devi Bhadrakali, Devi Mahatamya, Markandeya Purana, Basohli Tantric Series, A.D. 1690-95,
National Museum, New Delhi

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Golden Reality of Pahari Art

The importance of Pahari art in the world is because the art of this region is imbued with the Indian spirit. This art sprang from socio-cultural needs and the literary antiquity appeared in forms known to the masses. It belonged to the new and the greater world in style, spirit and mass. In the works of Kangra Masters of miniature painting, we see a gradual tendency towards sentimentality related to individual naturalization of the divine. In all material qualities, the paintings in mineral and vegetable colours have reached a height that make, the Kangra art the greatest representation of beauty and sublimation, universal and spiritual depiction and emotional expressiveness beyond the limitations of naturalism. Various spiritual currents mingled with the worldly objects and serene landscapes blended in a synthesis producing the greatest works of art. Deviations in cultural influences have little or no noticeable impact. The Pahari art has been given to us by local schools of art, which were imbued with the character of the people in whose midst the artists lived. The artists were influenced by their environment to create an original and thoroughly characteristic style, which the most unpractised eye can easily recognise as Kangra Qlam. The Pahari art is the art of the most active, sober and realistic people where the original conception and stylization can be recognised at once. The mythological and historical scenes are related to unexpected glimpse of the open country because the landscapes and figures in the paintings leave nothing to illusiveness in these miniatures. We see artistic ideals which give us detailed glimpses of the great artistic and cultural age of the Western Himalayan states as a replica of the Indian Hindu culture.

The Kangra Pahari miniatures are impulsive towards the transcendental and supernatural, at times super-sensual, from Devi paintings of Devi Mahatamya and from various manuscripts related to the cult, we find evidence of the abstract and achieving picturesqueness. Detail is neglected but elaborate ornamentation compensates for the neglect. Often idealisation and naturalistic representation in line and colour bring these works closer to life instinct. The Devis start appearing real. We come face to face with the dreams of the earlier generations in Kangra divinity portraiture which is increasingly lucid expression of a new tendency in Pahari art towards super-sensual being provided pure abstraction of line but this idiom is only a spoke in the wheel of artistic evaluation, and not a touchstone. Kangra Pahari art is partly born of the desire to preserve popular legends in permanent form and enriched by the literary manuscripts in illustrations which formed the world of Pahari miniature paintings. The conventional gods and goddessess appeared in a certain degree of freedom seen only in the representation of garments and ornamentation.

Those who find Mughal and Persian influence on Kangra miniatures must understand the fact that the art of Islam is by no means Arab, but based on spiritual attitude of Islam—which means submission to the will of God—Mohammed. We find similarities in the character of Byzantine and Mohammedan monotheism, which produced a similarity in the art of two religions. The art of each shows a tendency towards the abstract. The Greek art shows confident surrender to the physical world shown by the Greeks. The Islamic art can be understood if one understands the spiritual and intellectual foundations. The miraculous is born of a uniform religion of Islam which is of the same ceremonial requirements everywhere. The art of Islamic countries differed in details dependent on the spirit and ritual of the Islam. The Kangra Pahari art has no such compulsions in its varieties of themes—literary and religious.

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The New Persian art developed around A.D. 750 from Koofa and after A.D. 762 from Baghdad and came to be called the Oriental way of life in art. Kangra art never had the urgency to borrow from the changing art concepts of Persia and its adjoining countries. The Mughals are related to post-Baghdad tradition, Kangra is free of such ailments. Eastern Indian art tradition, Western Indian miniature in manuscripts and Rajasthan folk art are Indian to the core till about 17th century and stream of purity in art has flown down the deserts till today. On the other hand Pahari art had a tradition older than what other parts of India could present to our eye. We in Kangra hills have no ceremonial compulsions nor do we surrender to the set principles of the physical world or the One Lord stream. Our divinities are 84 crores (840 millions) and our art is the art of desires of these 84 crores which would hardly need a supporting hand from Mughal way of life, no matter if the artists be of Hindu or Muslim origin, they painted for a tradition related to well grounded, strongly established religious society which had a cultural heritage from the Ramayana, Mahabharta and even ancient intellectual background related to the Vedic and Puranic characters.

Devi Dhumavati, Guler, A.D. 1785-1800
Bhuri Singh Museum, Chamba

My Kangra residence facing the snow-capped peaks of Dhauladhar presents from its rooftop of the second floor a view of green hills, glittering streams, widespread paddy fields, dimmed lights of Dharamsala and Kangra to the East-west and distant horizons to the North-west with South-eastern pastures and outer hill ranges in the steep gradients intercepting the valley at places to provide terraced fields a breath of fresh air directly from the western Himalayan breezes, cool and soothing. I find all this in miniature landscapes.

In this vale, the sages in remote past sat in samadhis. The Shakti cult Devis accepted sacrifices of human heads and animals. The mists and fogs even today bring alive the mystic panorama of the past alive with the cluster of birds including crows, kites, parrots and pigeons covering the evening sky with worried mutterings and cry calls for those left behind.

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Our tastes, aspirations and beliefs are basis of our literature which perpetuates our cultural traditions. Symbols are imagined in our mind and definitive meaning of these symbols is endowed to us by literature which deals with the life and mindset of the times. Symbols when emerged in words and put to test in colour reach a stage where concrete expressions are visualized : a painting is born. For expression of ideals of religious faiths and complexities of life in philosophical speculations created by deeper mysteries of life, we seek the blessings of the lords : Vedic and Puranic, parables and folk tale-oriented that strengthen our faith, devotion and self-confidence.

The Shilpa Shastra deals with the techniques of painting and sculpture by laying various norms and principles which when related to poetry a set of percepts about form of expression, structural beauty, the adverse effects along with ornamentation rhetorically control us and the great epics in colour appear in thought and get converted into a complete picture in speech silenced.

The moods and feelings in Kangra Pahari style of miniature paintings are actuated by the artists where literature is the basis of their composition. In fact colours provide decorative patterns which emancipate us from our overcharged feelings, truly purgated. These miniatures are representation of *Bhava* (sentiment based on incident) and *Rasa* which, when supported by rich palette giving expression to symbological significance create a panorama of abiding beauty. The Indian tradition of poetics is not different from western theories, but the poetics of Bharata Muni has more and more of philosophy.

Devi Kali, Kulu, Pahari, Devi Mahatamya, Markandeya Purana, Mid 18th Century
Himachal State Museum, Shimla

Colours represent our thoughts and feelings and are capable of interpreting each fraction of a second into details of images. Indian poetics inform us on the philosophy of colours. We find 'Rasa' matching colours. Shringara Rasa or the erotic is dark brown, *Hasya* (joviality) is white, Karuna (Pathos) is grey, rudra (fury) is red. The Vira or the heroic is fair (which could be a mixture of white and yellow, white and pink etc.), Bhayankara (terror) is black, Vibhatsa (the odious) is blue and Adbhuta or the marvellous is yellow. Other classical categories speak of dark brown, black, yellow and fair or white type of classification given to four directions, named respectively East, South, West and North. Pictorial response was never the purpose of

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poetry but poetic imagery is not different from pictorial representation.

Painting of the period under review is based on a theme, a picture, an impulse, and imagination does not rest. Literature gives us ideas, characters, situations, aspirations and inspires us as painters to interpret the reality of symbolic or experience of life of others but controlled and manipulated by us in legitimacy of flow of colour of our desires.

Ashtabhuja Devi, Guler, A.D. 1812
Bharat Kala Bhawan, Varanasi

Kangra art after 1750 and upto 1800 A.D. provides luxury in painting engendered by the literary attainment of the period where we meet delicate ethnic types, extensive and luxuriant forts and palaces, rhythmic vegetation and refined colours expressed in fullest lyricism of poetry of Sanskrit and Brajbhasha. Poetic convention in Pahari art is sincerely followed in Baramasa, Nayaka-Nayika, Rangamala and Gita Govinda series. Sometimes I suspect the artists and masses aiming at revival of Bhakti Cult through Kangra Pahari art and endorsing the cult for future fortification. But, I am confused somewhere. No, this could not be the aim with the artists who prepared universal expressions and what we notice as landscaped figurative detailed for our vision is artist's reaction to literature which restricted the verse only to convey his feelings in colour, space and line. Poetry is only for empty volumes here.

India is a land of world's most enchanting landscape and as such presents a feast of lofty Himalayas and sea shores of no ending, temples and churches of decorative sculptural esteems. Literatures both epic and classic in theme and content influences us with old traditions worth portraiture in precision of line, vivid and harmonious colours and wealth of refined details of divinities and flora and fauna and of course, its culture where the lusty Rajas and aware commoners lived in peace despite the contrasts of a hundred diversions.

Pahari artists generally came from the restricted tradesmen or artisan class but calligraphy and manuscript are

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related to scholars who were also celebrated painters. Kangra art has creative spirit and it is not the hands and method of production of a painting that makes an art, it is the Indian creative spirit. Pahari figures are more human than divine. The art of period under review is not wild but possesses self-control and considered, well-planned ferocity which exists side by side with a certain effeminacy and refinement. I find occasionally, in Pahari art, disregard for the classical and a leaning towards new realism. It is fine art without mechanical approach which the master artists gave to the tradition. Kangra art is understandable and accessible and capable of influencing the related art of the contemporary world. Art, here, is expression of the philosophy of the people who could never free themselves of religious tradition : Vaishnava or ancient, and it is very close to the natural style. Painting has always been the highest representation of art and in Kangra art we notice stylization in the representation of physical and spatial depth. It is scene painting with secular serenity of dreamy sweetness and sublimation.

Devi Kali as Chamunda stands astride Lord Shiva, Devi Mahatamya, A.D. 1840
Bhuri Singh Museum, Chamba

Indian art till early 20th century was confined to conventional views but the sudden appearance of 17th, 18th and 19th century Pahari art from the Punjab Hills under the shadow of the western Himalayas, profoundly modified the conventional approach. The Pahari miniatures revealed an artistic tradition entirely different from that of the Mughal miniatures. Hill States, feudal courts, noble families with religio-cultural aristocratic tastes extended from the valley of Sindhu river to the springs of the Ganges in Tehri Garhwal. Various State and District Gazeteers single out about 42 states where some or the other tradition of painting flourished. The miniature paintings of Kangra, Kashmir, Chamba and Kulu was supported by monuments of individual styles of architecture and sculpture reared and developed by the groups of certain elite classes nestled in the mountainous terrain unaffected by the aliens till the Mughals started their attacks to gain control of these tiny kingoms and fiefdoms, but by and large these states had comparative independent life, despite

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the fact of rivalries and internal feuds overshadowed by healthy rivalry in various fields including painting. Moreover, the setting of these regions is idyllic which helped the growth and development of art, especially miniature paintings. The hill terrain bottled between western Himalayas and geologically ancient Shivalik ranges created ideal opportunities for the revival, upbringing and growth of art. Whole of the area covered by valleys and mountainous habitation is romantically beautiful with Ravi, Beas and Satluj rivers flowing through these principalities supported by numerous tributaries and ravines creating a spell of heaven on earth while undulating hillocks, foothills and high ranges are constantly in view. I need colours, brushes and canvas to express my love to hill rivulets, nestling village landscaped in dream land, green meadows and widespread pasturas, stately deodars and not so lofty pine trees, mango grooves, shrubs, flowering plants and creepers which complete the enhancement of the scene worldly and divine in mass and spirit. And all this was sufficient for my ancestors to paint for love and perpetuity.

Devi Durga as Tripura Sundari seated on Lord Shiva,
Devi Mahatamya, Kangra, Early 19th Century
Bhuri Singh Museum, Chamba

Art borrowed themes from religious Hindu classics and the popular poetic literature of love in these miniatures which gave these themes embellishment by the resources of art not for descriptive realism but for inducing a poetic trance. Artists applied the rhythmical qualities of line for achieving a sense of cadence, and colour was used symbolically as suggestive of prevalent mood. Even landscapes got treatment as forests of symbols in which each image—tree, flowers, rain, birds and animals—contributed its fill of poetic suggestion.

Sansar Chand's court had paintings done by Gaudhu, grandson of Naimsukh of Guler and his cousin Khushala, the second son of Manaku. Writing on these painters, one has to firmly say that Kangra-Guler-Basohli is one style, and this style is enriched by the artists who produced a dazzling array of illustrated masterpieces,

The Lahore Museum can provide us proof that Basohli work there is painted by NainSukh and Sansar Chand's court had NainSukh's grandson as the chief painter. NainSukh was the son of Seu of Guler. My consideration is

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based on this fact and I have no hesitation in combining Kangra-Guler-Basohli under Kangra Qlam.

Quoting Anand Coomar ~wamy is relevant where we find sensitive, reticent and tender, reflecting self-control and serenity of Indian life a1.J the definitely theocratic and aristocratic of Indian society. It lends itself to the utterance of serene passion and the expression of unmixed emotions. Dr Randhawa has endorsed the above viewpoint adding the 'symbolism conveys to us a sense of reality,....the style has unique sense of freedom and is closely connected with the soil.' It is satisfying to see Randhwa basing his judgement on art which has no self-consciousness, no studied emotions, no attitudes. To quote, "it is free from stresses of exaggerated personality and deliberate individualisation and the painting is nothing but music in colour. The emotions it seeks to portray are registered with astonishing truth. The technique is limited and we find the links employing formulas in the portrayal of features, and landscape yet the effect is beautiful, for the forms that evoke it are truly vital, transcending the limitations of mere technique." Let me examine Randhawa's approach in few more words. Mysticim, and lyricism apart with the passage of time 'more animated figures', 'more nervous and fluent line', 'deliberate search for physical charm', willowy and slender women with their 'eyes very long and curved', 'deep-dyed fingers' and 'delicate tapering', all these traits and features decode subtle charm, delicate and refined....feminine grace. Dr Randhawa's study has generalized facts which perhaps are well said in praise but they lack many considerations where neglect of basic form is not a distortion but an experiment in ornamental art developed in formats with experience and well applied mannerism and thought. What appears as development to Dr. Randhawa's eyes is in fact modern Kangra art of the experimental and reproductional period produced in Sansar Chand's court.

Devi Baglamukhi, Kangra, A.D. 1840
Bhuri Singh Museum, Chamba

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History of people of Kangra valley has not so far given us much information on traditions and exploits of the people of the dark ages. The Epic Mahabharata, speaks of Trigata King Susharman, but the Mahabharata is no history. The invasion of Mahmood Gaznavi in 1009 A.D. has left tales and memories but no proof. Old forts and fortresses speak of glorious days of the past without passing on to us any vital clues of literary importance. Architectural evidence of Masroor, Baijnath and Kangra valley temples is the only source which points out to our inherent strength of culture and nationalism of people who have protected their cultural habits with acceptance of new elements. Illustrated manuscripts of earlier days either have met wholesale destruction or transfer to other territories having no hints of immediate survival of such works. No historian has taken the trouble to find out if Gaznavi and others have a major role in stealing and plundering of our art treasures especially, the illustrated and illuminated manuscripts. Even now it is possible to trace the thread of traditional art which did not die and remained in the memories of people resulting in rich Kangra school of miniature art traditions reappearing so suddenly in late 17th century. Perhaps tales, both legendary and historical, romances and victory of good over evil gave us art so suited to the peaceful people (not kings) and lyrical influence of Ramayana and Bhagavata Purana. Local rulers, at least a few of them need to be appreciated for the tradition of patronage, so vital to the maintaining of a few expensive teams of artists who worked for protection of previous existing idioms and Qlams without yielding to the external pressures.

The Devi with 18 Arms, killing Demon King Mahishasura, who emerges in human form out of his own body, Devi Mahatamya, Kulu, A.D. 1800, National Museum, New Delhi

The Pahari art has the spell of divine realization which dazzled the populace through the asceticism of the mystics and this led the feudal chiefs to bring divinity to art. Kangra art by A.D. 1720 had established conventions for trees, rocks and hills, clouds and the stance and expressive gestures of human figure. We see some of the finest miniatures in the beginning of eighteenth century showing a powerfully excessive line controlling the design with full palette employed yielding result of emotional intensity and range and a sense of scale and style continued in an expressive mood for two centuries not

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to be found even in Persian or European paintings.

Acceptance of symbols leads to developing patterns borrowed from rituals and tradition in colours lyrical and dramatic both within the formulae of the Kangra Qlam in facial and clothing type. Vaishnavite thought came from the old cultural values in illuminated manuscripts. I often have noticed abstraction in early Kangra-Basohli works where mysticism in theme got transferred to colour. The synthesis of various Pahari idioms appears in self consciously attempted paintings based on manuscripts. Our mythology in hills was fortunately not corrupted by invaders and rulers who captured the plains and remained away from the hills excepting in temporary invasions and retracts.

Adoration of Devi by the gods, Devi Mahatamya, Kangra, A.D. 1825-30
Himachal State Museum, Shimla

The reliance on God as inspiration behind universe had an impact on Pahari art that was acquired from the essence of poetry, classical tradition and ritualistic approach to life where young lovers were deities and incarnations of gods. Love had become light to keep the flame aglow in distant hills. Message of love echoed in hills in tempestuous storms and thunder over the serene lush green valleys and lofty mountains. This resulted in Kangra producing distinctive styles in miniature painting which were unlike those of other regions including the Mughal courts and Sikh traditions. Pahari Kangra has unusual qualities of pictures produced by artists of traditional manner with character and independence maintained.

Kangra unfortunately never had a historian before and after 14th century who could talk of men of letters and aesthetics, painting and music. No records like the one we have as Babarnama or Rajatarangini exist to talk of Guler-Kangra, Chamba-Basohli in terms of artistic or mystic development of that period. It is unbelievable that scholars were non-existent excepting the Purohit category in the Himalayan region. All poetry, all classics, Krishna cult or Vaishnav influence was the result of unknown scholars of hills whose eminence and renown must have been recorded by Historians. Calligraphy of Kashmir and

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illumination of Nepal apart from Miniature art of Kangra Hills were the established schools by 16th century. Persia, Iran, Herat, China could have astistic link and looking back what we know of our miniatures, we must accept our tradition having influenced the art of the world around the spatial segment of Globe called Asia.

In the whole history of Kangra miniatures there are no remarkable figures than lovers in Baramasa series. Never before or since has hill art made so mighty a stride in the space of one generation as we notice in Guler-Kangra. We get some idea of what they achieved if we look at the complete series of Bihari Satsai based on Kangra art or Nala Damayanti compositions. To obtain the best possible insight into the birth and growth of Hills miniature, a visit to National Museum, New Delhi, Government Museum, Chandigarh and Bharat Kala Bhavan, Varanasi is a must. Here we may see what are probably the best preserved examples of 18th and 19th century miniature Hill paintings. Art, in these miniatures shows a sense of perspective and gives real effect of space and distance. Draughtsmanship is undistorted. Conception of human body and faces are superb in all its delicacy.

Goddes Kali, Mandi A.D. 1725
National Museum, New Delhi

It is a great misfortune that we know so little about the lives of the amazing painters. Therefore it is by the paintings and their style, rather than any written record, that we endeavour to reconstruct the flowering of art in Kangra valley and widely in Trigarta. Art here is homely, easily understandable, appealing to the people and pleasing to the eye by clear representation of literary themes often founded on everyday life of Krishna Leela and always tinged by a sentiment perceptible and congenial to the humblest intelligence. Subject was of paramount importance, every picture told a story, and the story was usually of a religious nature that required no erudition for its comprehension.

Kangra portraits are calm and serene. The artists are very careful and minute in detail, and there is evidence of fullness without manipulation which uncovers the veils of vagueness if any. We notice outstanding excellence in

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literary series painted over a period of 150 years. Pandit Seu's generation, especially Nainsukh is in fact 'fresh artistic triumph,' and we notice no struggle but pictures of considerable historic interest in 'Gita Govinda' and 'Rasamanjari' series. So wonderful was the artistic activity inspired by the wave of religious concepts which swept through Kangra valley and its adjoining hill states, the masters of miniature artists represented the culture of the hill

Kali and Shiva in Dance, Guler Style at Basohli, early 18th Century
Private Collection

kingdoms and the people of the era. Looking back over the whole history of miniature art of Tibet, Nepal and Ladakh, we find Pahari art of Dhauladhar and Shivalik ranges fresh and towering. Woman in Kangra art is sometimes like a goddess in the empty air, she advances girdled about with a cloud in the arms of her lover. She it is who crushes extravagant hopes, who threatens the proud, to whom is given to beat down the haughty spirit and the haughty step, and to confound over great possessions. Perception and significance are the characters inbuilt in the valley art. Art favours us and adds graciousness to our lives. Art in its illuminated form overpowers the temples. Kangra art is art for common man giving at one time feeling of mysterious awe and spiritual joy.

As portratists these masters are above conjectures and controversy and without confusion. They have

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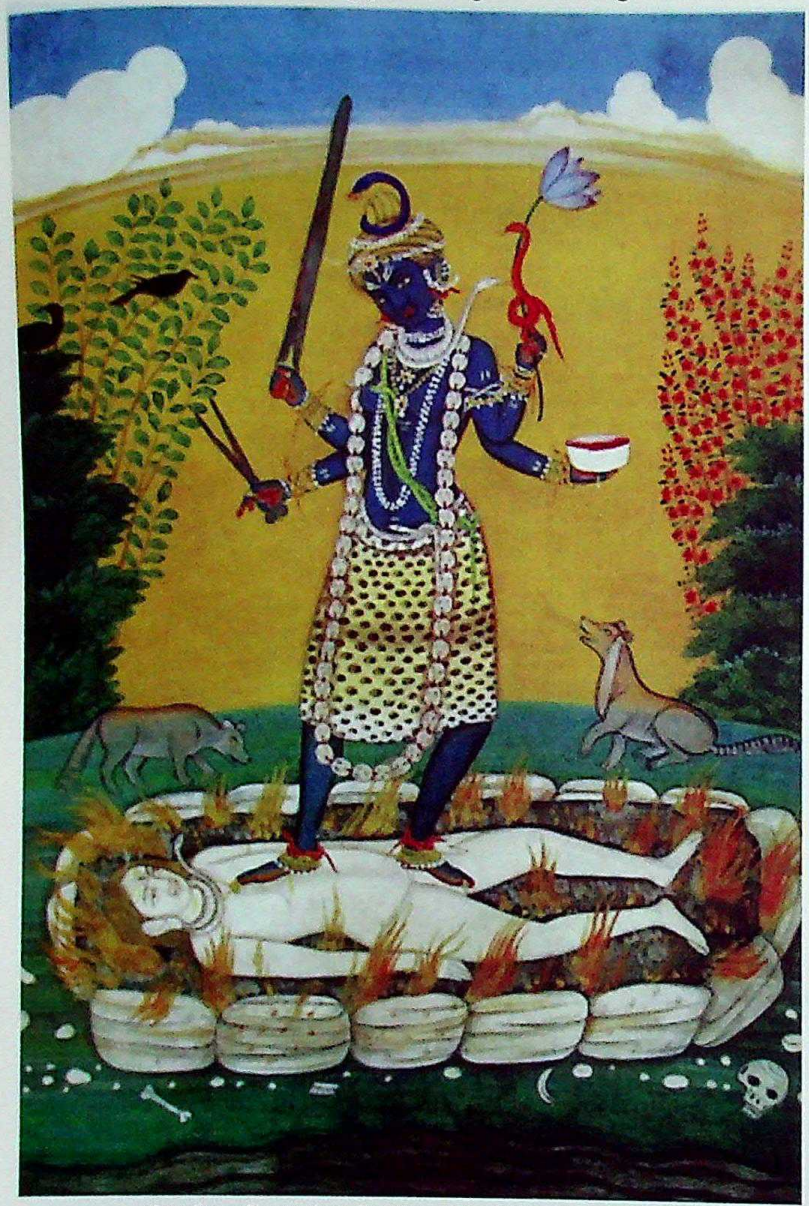
foreshadowed the future greatness of the artist as a miniature portrait painter. These miniature portraits despite the fact of Mughal and Rajput influences in style are capable of showing us the character of a man painted.

Pictorial elements of design are perfect in each landscape and detail of the characters portrayed. Landscapes are beautiful in the starry nights or moonlit floodings. Studies under the skin have masterly perfection. Lovers are handsome and we face exceedingly ornate figures matching the classical descriptions. Simplicity of these miniatures is not corrupted by the human vanity.



Devi Tara, Tantric Devi Tradition, Guler Style at Basohli, early 18th Century
Private Collection

These miniatures of main Kangra school have shown forms less muscular, gestures unexaggerated, the transitions suaver, the light and shades well controlled and properly contrasted. Use of solid pigments with the colours are properly treated. The growth of Kangra miniature art could not have been a sudden event without the tracing of contemporary influences where the unerring brush work and breathtakingly enlivened colour or the action of the figures dominated the whole composition. We notice the glory of series of literary works painted emphasizing the designed and well considered stress of greatness in sensuality and sensitivity. Figures possess grace which the artists have tactfully, with splendid presence of mind and charms, produced to capture our mind, eyes and heart in a single fraction of a second, especially the healthy and contented sense of detail radiating in each expression has a life lived. Landscapes soothe and colour our spirits and figures inspire and exhilarate us. The naturalness is not affected or inflicted with experiments which shows how capable and skilful these painters were. Unfortunately, Kangra art in nineteenth century fell victim to imitation but this has no reflection on earlier works that have exquisiteness mirrored not merely in portraits and figures in body but the very souls of humanity. The life of the 18th century people is interpreted in terms that appeal universality leaving behind a tradition which the western masters in comparison lack at times. At this stage I am not going into the factual or otherwise details of how miniature painting came to the Trigarta valleys. Kangra art originating at Guler set the fashion to various feudal states and generations of Pandits and chiteras and artists of carpenter and potter professional backgrounds devoted themselves to a tradition which is rich and unique in the world of art with late 20th century revivalical efforts. Pahari

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artists undaunted by the great achievements of Mughal and Persian miniature painters who were contemporary or ever preceded them, sought to form an independent style of their own based on a bold representation of religious scriptures, text and cult influences.

Devi Bhagvati, Guler, A.D. 1720-45
Bharat Kala Bhawan, Varanasi

The Pahari Art is the mirror of life, and a great part of the fascination of tradition in art is that, in it the great upheaval of history could not cloud the hill states giving Pahari miniature artists a breathing space, in the open where love and nature were having a live in arrangement. Action and thought are not independent here, but the style is "abrupt union of actual transcendental." Some pictures are fascinating because there is a touch of hysteria in love and union, earthly and divine both. Kangra artists in portraiture have taken real life models even in divinity descriptions and displays with unalterable patience and an ever-fresh inspiration and at times have shown renewed interest especially when designing the mystery of eyes stretched upto ears. Added with it were special effects of real light. Radha Krishna meeting in a bower is conceived as a beautiful piece of series of art work, free, firm and revealing. Life is chained by the brush in colour and then freed. Artistic approval is intense giving startling impression of life. Never have these artists compromised with their sense and soft style and we notice outlines lost in the delicate fusion of peculiar to Kangra colours which add to the great beauty of the colour effects. We can grant these works "The immaculate conceptions and imagination." Innocence and sweetness characterize the vision of the Nayikas, wedded or virgins, in love. Eyes reflect astonishment. The temper of Kangra art should be studied mainly as philosophical and mythological thought. In most of the miniatures based on literary tradition, love has won the day. We meet artists who are fully disciplined without defiance of social or ethical codes. Since most of the works are anonymous, the greatness of the individual artist has to be measured in the emotions expressed in colour. The moods and the

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feelings of the artists are the language of colour in these miniatures. Love for countryside and beautiful landscape speaks about the greatness of the unknown artists. We notice wonderful insight into character and details of inner lives of men and women, gods and goddesses appearing in human forms. Artists are ever careful and minute in detail and the works are superior to anything contemporary both in workmanship and expression. Kangra miniatures have concise and vigorous drawing and superb colour schemes.

Goddess Durga attended and hailed by Devas, Jammu in Kangra Style, early 19th Century
Dogra Arg Gallery, Jammu

Establishment of literary themes in the popular estimation as a branch of art, equal to the highest achievements of literary classics and love poetry was finally achieved by Nainsukh and his next two generations in numerous miniatures which they painted without entering an academy or a formal educational institution. Kangra artists never had formal studios. Kangra colours have their unique quality. I will expand on colour theory when dealing with the miniature pictures of various series.

Guler's Nainsukh spread his style to Dugar, especially Jammu and Basohli. He, his sons and Purkhu of Kangra and his clan of artists were poetic painters. They looked beyond the mere details to a larger treatment of nature seizing all poetry of sunshine, moonlight, and the mists of the mornings and evenings with the grandeur of storms, rains and the glow of the sky at sunset. Another feature of Kangra art is the predominanting dark with a very limited portion of light in the sky painted in grey which produced a splendid and harmonious effect. It seems impossible to surpass the power of colour which these artists attained, or the unparallel beauty in which they have clothed their poetic conceptions and artistry born of super imagination and skill. Our imagination looks out on a world of romance where colours intoxicate us and we subconsciously express elation and pride. Colour in Kangra miniatures reflects delicate hatchings giving rise to wonderful qualities of light colours which helped in proper representation of the scene and atmosphere. Use of gold in colour in the finished works glowed and sparkled with the brilliance of Nature's own colours. This effect, I have noticed in great British painter Turner (1775-1851) who was in fact contemporary of Nainsukh and his sons.

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Kangra painters used direct colours without any under painting of the subject in light and shade resulting in uniqueness of subject portrayed. Kangra Pahari miniatures are done on paper of homemade top quality and possess the natural effects of pigments used.

I endorse this view of distinctive style where the artists have induced a poetic trance; drawings have rhythmical qualities of line with a purpose for 'achieving a sense of cadence.' The quality of line and colour in Kangra art and broadly of the Punjab Himalayas is exquisite 'rendering of subtle ecstasies of romance.' The fact remains that this style of painting was born in Kangra and related Basohli states and the work found and spread elsewhere is broadly under the influence of these two not so distinct styles.

Devi Bhagvati, Guler, A.D. 1720-45
Bharat Kala Bhawan, Varanasi

Archer has observed about circumstances and style in the following words, "It was their accidental combination which led to the special situation out of which the Kangra style arose. Yet besides these important circumstances, one other factor must also be taken into account. There is a sense in which Kangra painting could only have arisen in the Punjab Hills. Its special cult of innocent womanhood was the product of Rajput tradition as they had developed in isolation". When we talk of circumstances we include patronage, existence of master artists, employment of artists, outer influences like the Mughal and Rajasthani influences etc.. Here I find, Kangra art independent of wider and intensive influences because of its quality of elegant idealism. Hill states because of the difficult terrain enjoyed freedom from outer influences and dominance of the big Royals of the plains, consequently Pahari painting 'expressed with more directness the basic sentiments of the courts.' Archer attributes it to the patrons and artists, both who were 'imbued with these emotional attitudes' that resulted in Kangra painting achieving its exquisite heights.

Forms of paintings can differ but the common trait of style will always be noticeable distinctly. Today we are in a position to widen our knowledge of Pahari Painting and reduce our impressions to order.

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Devi Mahatamya and Tantric Cult Painting

Pahari Devi Paintings of the Markandeya Purana's Devi Mahatamya have different versions published as Durga Saptasati which appeared in a number of idioms and styles between 16th to 19th centuries. Devi with her lotus seat signifying her divine authority transformed in cosmic as well as royal figure of professional feudal art, Devi is giver of joy. Clad in different garments and ornaments often with face bright and clear, shining with variegated gems and glowing autumnal flowers. The Devi in these pictures of Tantric tradition records the wonderful, breathtakingly beautiful, charming metamorphoses in a sequence of hundreds of paintings mostly inter-related expressing Devi's supreme expressive mysterious, tantric origins. Her human form is beguiling in her body forms, wearing heavenly pearls. She is mother, giver of joy in her smoky eyes and mostly painted in simple red-bordered on brilliantly burnished paper, she is god herself.

She is Bhadra Kali whom the Gods worship for their own purposes which ultimately is for the good of the humanity. We meet the Devi in various forms in tantric variations and in a group as matrikas. Red-complexioned Indrani, the charming Ambika, boar-headed Varahi, leonine Narsimhi, Vaishnavi attended by Garuda, Maheswari, the lotus-borne and Chaumunda standing on a corpse are a sight to look at.

In fact Bhadra Kali is known for her mystical sound of Kringa (क्रीं). The three lords, Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesha are present to attend the Devi to attain her ethereal image which makes her the most dominant power of the universe. The Lords stand in submission to her. Bhadrakali is Bhima too. She holds a book in hand when standing on a corpse, clad in yellow attire she is always around the sacrificial space everywhere. The corpse is Devi's throne and the circle of the rising sun covering the sacrificial space is the only place where Devi is invoked because it leads us to higher space, elevates us to attain the world where only the gods live.

Devi Bhuvaneshvari, Tantric Devi Series, A.D. 1660-70
Courtesy: Gursharan and Elvira Sidhu

Devi is Bhavani, Bhagvati when she is moonfaced and blows conch-shells to bestow upon us all wealth. She is always seated on a lavish throne which predicts good fortune, prosperity and happiness. In this form the fair-skinned Devi is for worship and sidhis and not for attaining worldly pleasures of sex, wealth and control in practice of hypostasized mental configurations.

Devi as Sidha Lakshmi in Tantric Cult is always accompanied by Kali. She drinks holy water, wears fine garments and sits on open full blossomed lotus flower. Devi Kali is subdued in appearance and Devi Lakshmi as

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Sidha form is an embodiment of beauty, charm and loveliness. Devi as Varahi is not different from the one spoken of in Devi Mahatmya of the Markandeya Purana. Varahi is in fact Shakti or power of Vishnu in Varahavatara. She in her ten arms holds different weapons or ayudhas. She is one of the nine forms that appear to help Devi in her fight against the demons.

Indrakshi, Tantric Devi Series, Baoshli , A.D. 1660-70
Private Collection

Devi is Indrakshi, being lord Indra's Shakti. She wears yellow garments, holds lotus, trident, conch, veena, damru and Khartala. She is master of the universe seated upon a lotus commanding space in perfect stillness. Her seat over water on lotus with high reed shows that she is the ruler. Indra being a god of Vedic origin is ruler of the world. The weapons provided by Indra to the Devi create a mythical and mystic illusion and the three great Lords, Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva adore her. In fact Lord Shiva is the first to offer his homage to her.

Devi Kalaratri wears a crown, drinks wines and prefers to sit on animal hides. In Tantric tradition she is dark in complexion which is in fact the colour of eternal night where no distinctions exist. As I have stated elsewhere Devi Bhuvaneshvari and Devi Kalaratri are part of Dashamahavidyas and they personify transcendent wisdom. The Devi in this form is in intoxicated and overexcited state. She is in fury, red in face and eyes.

Dashamahavidya is Bhuvaneshvari's abode. Lustre of the rising sun in circle is at the back of her head. She is three-eyed, holds goad, noose and lotus and wears ornaments which make her the ruler of the Universe. Especially the necklaces and the crown are studded with rare gems. The artists of Basohli have created pictures which match the original personality of the Devi that we find defined in the Markandeya Purana. She is personified divine privileged living knowledge as one of the Dashamahavidyas. Her appearance with smiling face and varda-hand, the boon-giver symbol allay all our fears. The artists of these paintings have provided hope and brightness that control the hidden line and drawing making these paintings of great sequential austerity, multidimensional, speaking and alive. Good luck and victory come with the boon given by this Devi.

Kalaratri, Baoshli, A.D. 1660-70
Courtesy: Museum Rietberg, Zurich

Devi as Bhadrakali is not only worshipped by mortals but also she is adorned by the Devas and demons. Basohli series of Tantric Devi is unique art done in opaque water colour in gold, silver, mineral and vegetable colours and decorated with beetle-wing cases on paper. The red-coloured Devi is painted with Indra whose body has multiple eyes. The Devi shines like fiery lightning, glows like gold. She is Raktadanta as a deity, has a dense tangle of snakes over her head and upper body spreading down to her waist. She is in auspicious form of Kali if invoked by a devotee. Kali is mostly identified in seventeen paintings in tantric Bhadrakali

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series but in different postures and attitudes. She loves ornaments and in various forms her feet also have anklets or payazebas with bells.

Dancing Bhadrakali, Basohli, A.D. 1660-70
Courtesy : Museum Rietberg, Zurich

After victory over the demons Devi is seen in dance praised by the three Lords and Indra. Laughing face, wine cup touching her lips and khappar full of blood are part of her chaturbhuja identification. She is in movement like Lord Shiva who always danced when in pain or happiness. In this form adoration of the Devi gives us assurance of our future secured from the demons who are the bad and ill of our life. Her dance in delight is for our protection and also assurance of Devi's blessings for our future.

Bhadrakali is also worshiped when in her lotus like right hand she holds the severed head of the Lord Brahma and in her left she holds Lord Shiva and Vishnu like doorva grass limps. Her smile indicates satisfaction. She devours the mover of the entire universe standing on a corpse and appears glowing like a newly appearing cloud. Devi in this role is terrifying, four-armed, dark-skinned, wearing a belt of severed hands she controls the time and latent cosmic power. She is seen holding sword ready to cut to pieces anything that appears before her. Her open mouth is devouring a lurid snack of corpses. In this form she is seen as devouring time as a loving mother who gives birth and when need be destroys the flesh.

Devi when accompanied by Tripura Bhairavi wears five snakes for her garland. She in this from is auspicious young goddess, drinking wine, standing on the body of Lord Shiva as consort of death. The two forms are supported by the third form in worship of the Devi herself. The pleasant face represents a happy mood of confraternity of the three forms.

Devi is also seen seated on a corpse large in size accompanied by a devotee and a serving from of the Devi herself. Devi in this form holds lotus, a flute and drinks wine from her cup. She represents timelessness and her two companions are representation of the highest levels of concentration.

Devi when adored with the Bija mantra 'Bhaim' equals a thousands rays of the rising sun. Accompanied by her three other forms as Kali, she is worshipped by the two Bhairavas with Kusha grass. Companions Bhima and Vahni-priya to her left are with the purpose of banishing all our fears. Devi Bhadrakali is the central figure surrounded by her other youthful forms seen in metaphysical abstractions and metaphorical relationship with each other. We meditate on the Devi for our inner attainments and satisfaction and for giving us Sidhi of the purest order.

Bhadrakali, Basohli, A.D. 1660-70
Riet berg Museum, zurich

We meet the Devi in Tantrik form when the crescent moon adorns her crown. She is dark complexioned, standing upon a corpse, her canine teeth protruding,

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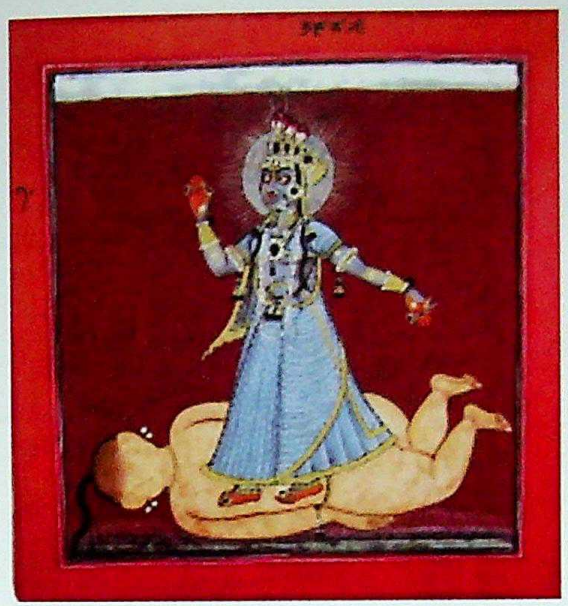
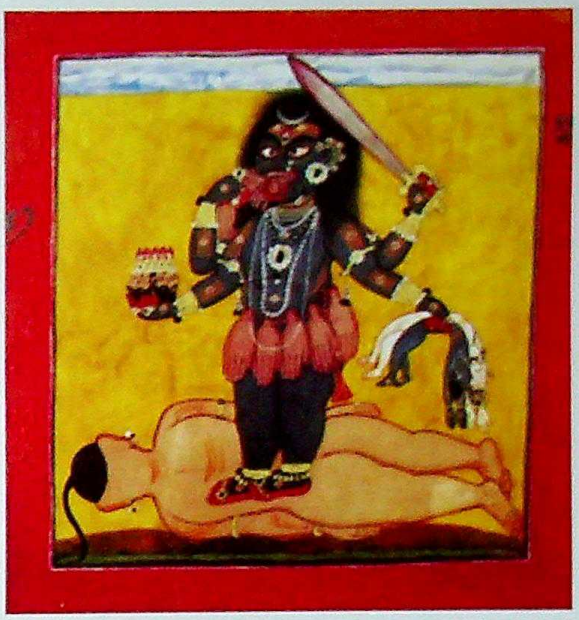
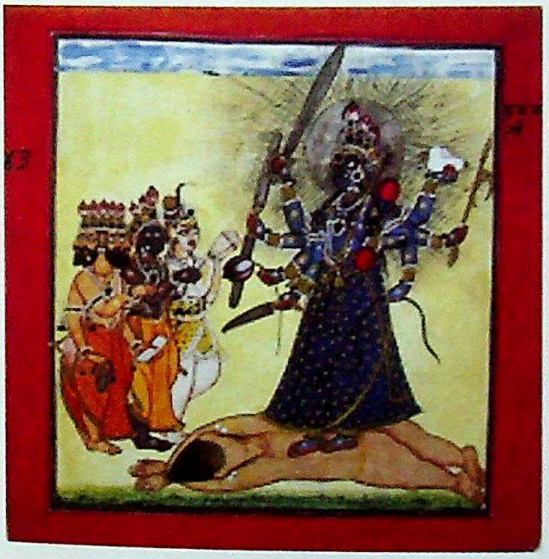


Devi as Raktadanta, Basohli, Tantric series, A.D. 1660-70
Pub.: The Krones Collection



Bhadrakali, Basohli, A.D. 1660-70
Pul.: Howard Hodgkin Collection, London



Devi Mahakali, Basholi, A.D. 1660-70
Courtesy: Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institute

Devis Bhadra Kali, Basohli, A.D. 1660-70
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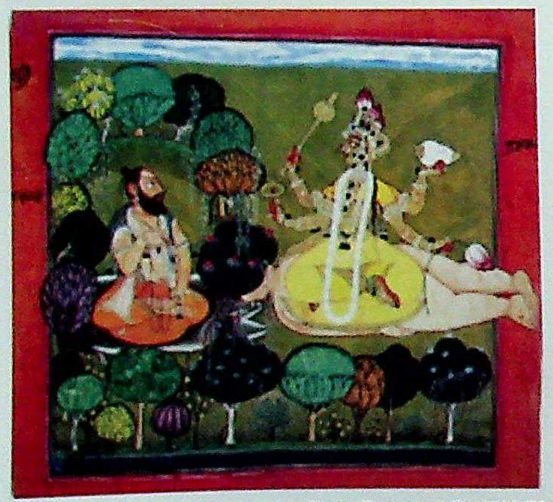
Varahi, Tantric Devi Series, Baoshli , A.D. 1660-70
Courtesy: Edwin Binny Collection, San Diego Museum of Art



The Devi and Chavayana Rishi, Basholi, A.D. 1660-70
Courtesy: Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institute

Bhadrakali and her associate Devis, Basohli, Tantric series
A.D. 1660-70

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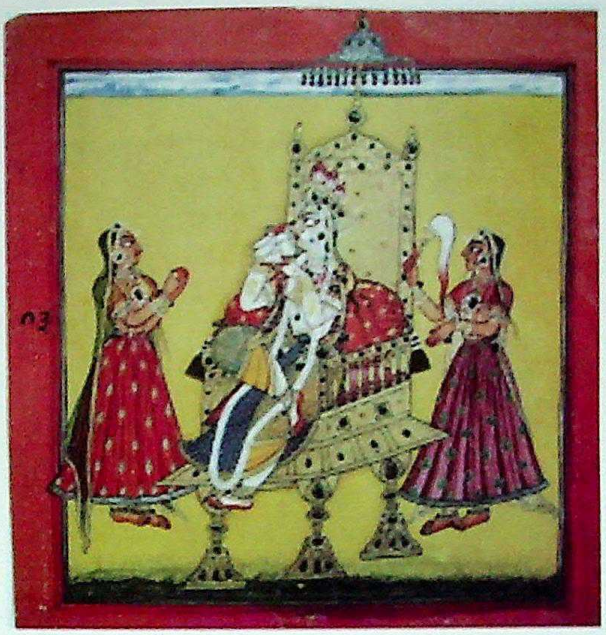
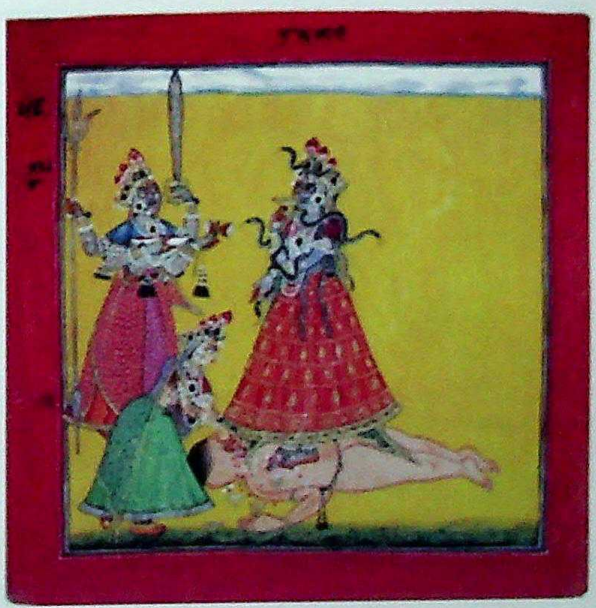
two hands blessing and protecting us with her third eye on her forehead, she keeps the Universe under her watch which is in fact her energy, the source of all cosmic evolution. She is active power of Shiva who is beyond all action and without her shakti the Lord is helpless. The Devi awakens Shiva and is his half strength she uses the Lord, the purusha, who acts only when the Devi desires him to do so.



Devi Bhagvati, Basohli, Tantrik Devi Series, A.D. 1660-70
Private Collection

Devi in Tantric forms is not different from the original Matrika. Bhadrakali is Devi as visualized in manifold forms in Devi Mahatamya and mystified in tantric cult but nowhere she is different from original Devi Parvati, Lord Shiva's consort. She is Kumari, unwedded from her earlier birth. Devi is the composite form of oneness and also multiple, many-in-one. Abstract yet visible, cosmic yet worldly, she is worshipped from occult angle also but mainly she is of Shakta tradition. Tantric Devi series is important because we have access to 32 paintings out of the set of seventy painted in late 17th century. We have eleven pictures in India and Pakistan, thirteen in private collection, eight in Europe and the United States in different Museums. My good luck took me to Simla where in the Himachal State Museum I could get a complete set of Devi Mahatamya of late16th century which gives us totally different concept of the Devi appearing in form of manuscript illustrations reproduced in original in the book of mine with complete text. The pictorial expressions are real wonders.

The Tantric Basohli Devi in fact is not of Basohli origin but of Pahari Tantric tradition painted with Sanskrit text at the back. The Takri script on the borders is for identification purposes. Devi is recorded in her individual forms and functions. Her six forms as Bhadrakali, Bhagvati, Bhuvneshvari, Indrakshi, Sidha Lakshmi and Varahi, in these 32 paintings are based on the Kalika Purana where she is Krishnaka in her Dakshina and Raktavarna form as Sundari, but she is Bhagvati herself who appears as Krishna-coloured and is known as Kali. Kali is also born as Svayamabhu Tripura Bhairavi. Neela Tantra in Kashmir speaks of Devi in Tantrik forms. Devi here is force of all cosmic energy, painted in myths and legends. I have provided pictures of all idioms for scholars and students to compare various concepts and styles in this volume.



Bhadrakali accompanied by Tripura Bhairavi, Basohli, A.D. 1660-70
Private Collection of Paul F. Walter

Tantric Devi series and Rasamanjari series are linked to Basholi because of the use of beetle wings, but we have no documentary evidence to relate these two works to one territory or one painter. Use of gold was common in all Pahari painting schools and sub schools. Since the Tantric series is undated, the scholars think this was painted around A.D 1660-70. This leaves, many question marks. The painter who is

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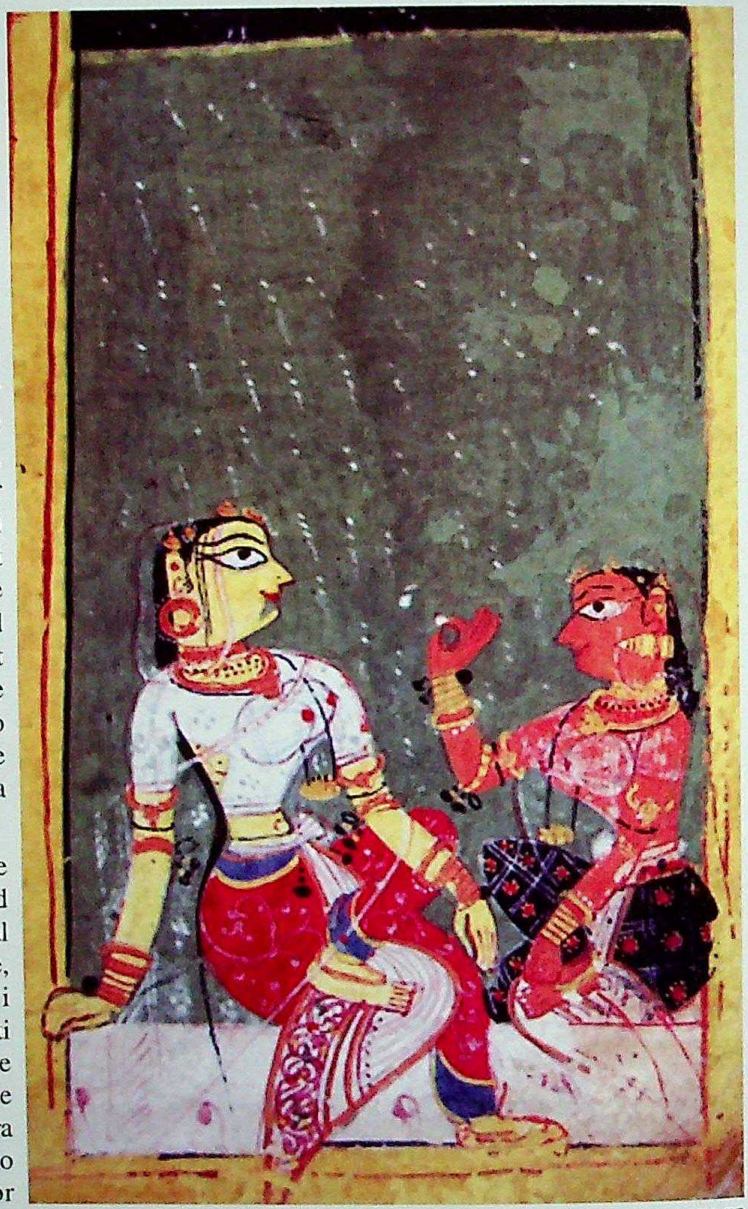
attributed with these works is Devi Dasa of Nurpur who to my knowledge painted for Basohli Kings from AD 1674–1695 only and as such any earlier works ascribed on guesses may be confusingly controversial. Also the fact that Devi Mahtamya of Simla as published here is a hundred and more years older than any Basohli works proves that Tantric Devi series is not the earliest work traced by scholars since 1916 and mere assertion on stylistic argument without intrinsic or historical evidence would not convince one or anyother person that Devi Dasa could be the painter behind this work.

Devi in most benign being and most terrifying incarnations has appeared in art only by the end of 17th century and early 18th century. The Tantric series embodies abstractions in main and attending figures. This we also notice in 18th and 19th century works of Chamba and Kangra. Devi can be known to us through high levels of meditation for which we depend upon knowledge and this can lead us to gain trained insight, only when we as devotees are initiated. We cross all obstacles in our devotion and are able to understand the complicated forms born of tantric tradition. Concept of Devi could be better understood when we study Devi Mahatamya because no Devi is different from the one that we meet in the Markandaya Purana. Rishi Medha and Chyavana might be two different sages but the Devi invoked by Devas for them is the power of Lord Shiva, Devi Parvati, Who is Lakshmi, Sarawati and Indrani also. She is Katayana Rishi's Katayani and our Durga Bhagavati.



Devis Kali and Chandika, Devi Mahatamya, Kangra, A.D. 1574-75
Himachal State Museum, Shimla

All paintings of Devi Mahatamya are dialectical, and they have given imagery and the supple and sophisticated metaphysical thought. They have given an idea to me, supported by my home town Devi Bajreshvari at Kangra, the famous Shakti Peetha, that the Devi Cult never died in the hills because hills are the only abode of the Devis, may it be Jawala, Bhadrakali, Tara or any other form, but a fact which no scholar till today has discussed or mentioned that Kangra Bajrehvari temple is original Bhadrakali temple and the only one in India which in the near past was associated with sacrifice and Tantric Sidhis. The presence of great Bhairava in this temple is a good reminder of old ritual practice followed in Tantric Sadhna. Kangra fort, the Bhimakota or Nagarkot is historically ancient fort on record and no wonder it is to see the sages settling in these hill surroundings, to worship, invoke and glorify the Devi, and as such my theory that Guler Kangra

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Basohli idiom is one holds good because it is Shakta cult dominated region where Devi is the most powerful deity even today.

Simla manuscript painting is Tantric to look at but its origin from the Kangra fort is related to Nagarkot Devi which has given us the unique in art. These paintings in general flatness and governing assemblage of four-square components, the background unified by a single plane of intense coloured the narrow strips of wavy sky and the small waisted buxom female deity figures with long noses, small beautiful chins and eyes elongated to touch the ears are rare feast to our eyes.

Devi Mahatamya, manuscript folio two, page 3, Kangra, A.D. 1574-75
Himachal State Museum, Shimla

Scholars like Dr B.N. Goswami V.C. Ohri, Eberhand Fischer, Catherine Glynn and Vidya Desehejia have referred to the Simla find of Jai Singhpur Nagar of Kangra origin. Nupur, Guler Mandi and Kulu were parts of Kangra region and these Devi works were locally created without outside help. Voids occur for those who have not followed the Tantric cult of Kangra and Jawalamukhi temples from much before the Akbar days (starting AD 1556 as emperor), hence they believe in speculations, outside influences, imported painters or wandering artists. Devi Mahatamya series was undoubtedly painted by Pahari artist at Nagarkot and any Gujrati artist imagined settling here is corruption of history by these who write for government agencies and fund-aided projects and forget the wide, intricate and complex structure of hill culture. Devi Mahatamya Style was popular in Panjab hills in illustrated works and as such I reject the theory of Mughal, Gujrat or any other invited or employed artists ever connected with Devi Mahatamya Series. Dr Vidya Desahajia has rightly rejected Ohri, Goswamy and others because she is the one scholar who has devoted lifetime to studies on Devi. I have always said that carpenters and goldsmiths were not the painters behind Pahari painting, but these works were done by mature artists of local origin, where some family based artists also contributed to this great treasure. To me Mughal painting style looks totally different. Kangra and other Pahari idioms are something special, might be they are born of a family tradition. I am including silver carvings and marble images of the Kangra temple to support my theory that Devi paintings of Devi Mahatamya tantric or otherwise are creations of Pahari artists, rich in style, unique in line and colour and based on great manifestation of the goddess who is the energy of Lord Shiva.

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Devi Mahatamya, manuscript folio six, page 11, Kangra, A.D. 1574-75
Himachal State Museum, Shimla

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Devis dance on demon Raktabija's death. Devis Seen are Aindari, Brahamani, Maheshwari, Ambika Vaishnavi, Sharveri, Narasimhi, Chandi and Katayayini, Devi Mahatamya, Kangra, A.D. 1574-75

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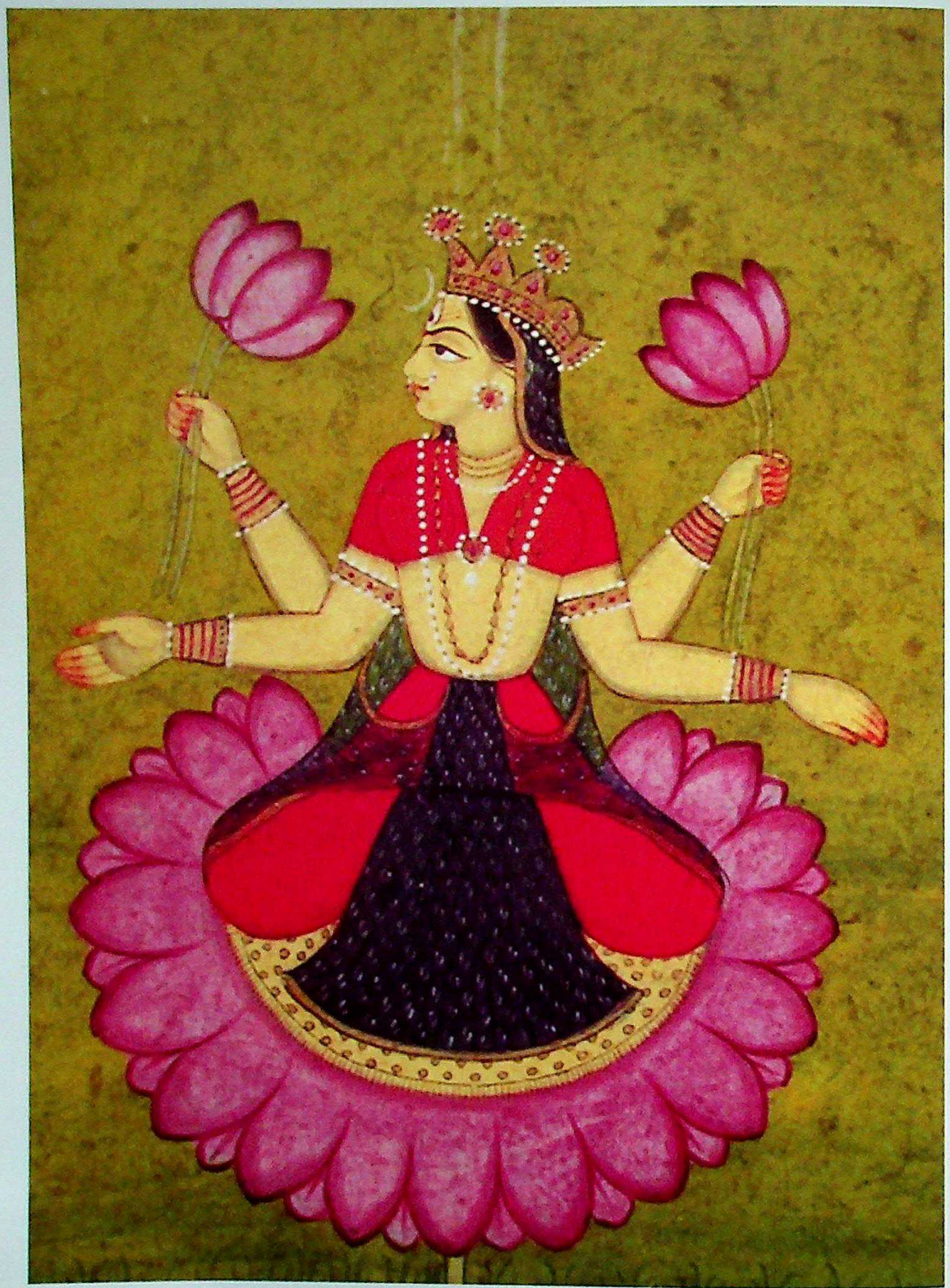

Devi Gaja Lakshmi, Nurpur A.D. 1810-15
Museum of Kangra Art, Dharmsala

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Devi Sarswati, Guler, Late 18th Century
Government Museum and Art Gallery, Chandigarh

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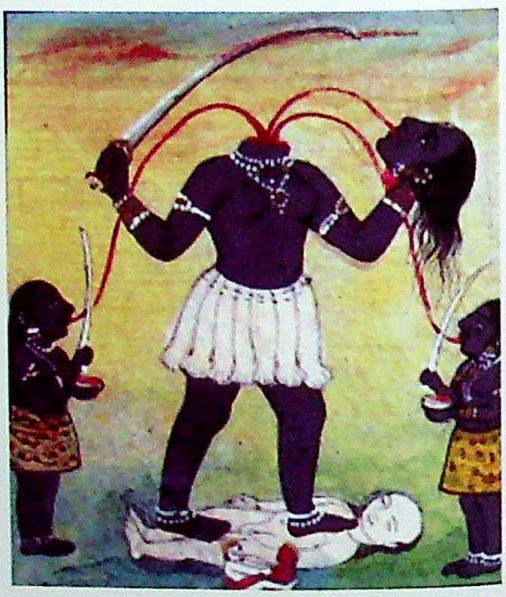
Dashamahavidya

Kali as Devi is knowledge. In Mahabhagvata she is considered first among the Dashamahavidyas.

Devi in Dashamahavidya is based on the Kalika Purana. The Markandeya Purana also has reference to Kalika episode where Devi appears as Parvati and adopts the form of Devi Kali. All knowledge is born of Mahakali, the most loved devi of Lord Shiva, the Mahakala. She appears in Dakshina and Vama forms and Dashamahavidya is only the other name of this Devi. Devi appears before Deves in this form and as such Kali is the chief Devi. Kali is Kaushaki born as separated from Gauri Parvati; the same Devi is seen as Tripura Bhairavi. Kali is Mahamaya; she rides a dead body mostly.

Kali in her Blue form is Tara, known as Neela Sarswati. She is referred to in Tantric tradition in scriptures like the Brihaneel Tantra. Kali stands on Shiva who adopts the shava posture. The great sage Vashishta is attributed as the first worshipper of Devi as Tara. The Mahakala Sanhita's Kalkhanda describes this Devi in detail. Her worship is for wordly attainments.

Chinnamasta is Bhuvneshvari's reverse; she appears when knowledge is vanishing or decreasing; she holds third place in Dashamahavidyas. Her form is secret, hidden, complicated. To quench the hunger of her two supporting Devis, she cut her own head and also joined in drinking her own blood alongwith the other two Devis. The beheaded Devi is known as Chinnamasta. In her Nabhi is established the Yoni chakra. This Devi is worshipped in the dead of night. As tantric Devi is attained to sidhis, yogashastra refers to Brahamagranthi, Vishnugranthi and Rudra Granthi which stays in Mooladhara, Manipura and Agya Chakras respectedly. The yogis believes that below Manipura Chakra are veins which control Kama and Rati, the erotic and sexual base on which Devi Chinnamasta is stationed. This Devi in Brihadaranayaka Upanishada is Ashvashir Vidya, in Shakta cult Hayagriva Vidya and Ganapataya sect Chinnashirha Ganapati rahasaya. She is also called Bajra Virochanya. Bhaisatantra gives great importance to this Devi.



Chinnamasta, Dashamahavidya of Bhairavas
Chamba, A.D. 1782, Bhuri Singh Museum, Chamba

Shourashi is the most charming Maheshwari Shakti. All mantra-tantra is based on this Devi. She has five faces. Shrividya is another name given to this Devi and she is also known and worshipped as Lalita, Raja-rajeshvari, Mahatripurasundari and Balapanchdashvi and is ancient knowledge in all her forms known as Adyashakti. Lord Shiva is credited with disclosure of Sadhna and that is why in all Shankrapithas she is worshipped in Shri yantra form. Her station is on the Navel of Lord Shiva and as Shourashi Tripura Sundari is worshipped in Shri Chakra.

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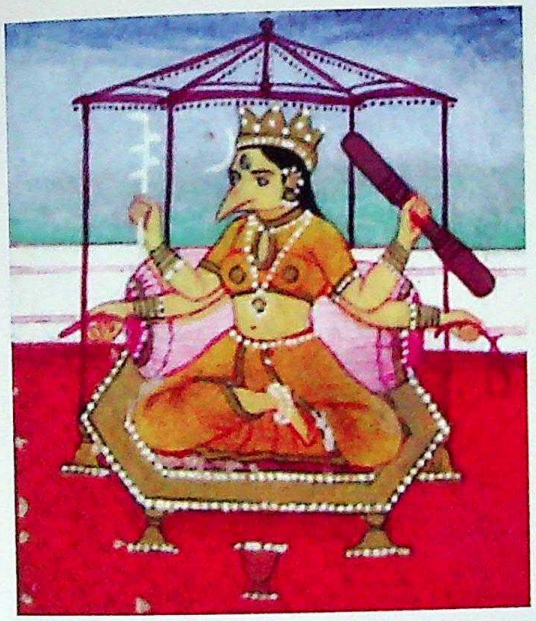
Bhuveneshwari is equal in form to Mahalakshi; she is Lord Shiva's companion. Devapurana accepts Nature as Bhuvneshwari. She being Shiva's form is also known as Roudri, Vama, Jayestha. As per Mahanrvana tantra, all ten mahavidyas depend upon this Devi's service. Dashamahavidyas start with the element of Kali and reach Kamla at the tenth form and ultimately Kali becomes the supreme nature. In the Markandeya Purna, Devi Mahatamya 11th chapter, she is Shakambhri and as the killer of demon Durga she is Durga also. Mahanirvanatantra details her thousand names.



Baglmukhi, Dashamahavidya of Bhairavas
Chamba, A.D. 1782, Bhuri Singh Museum, Chamba

Tripurabhairavi is the Shakti (power) of Dakshnamurti Kalabhairava. She heads the Gupta Yoginis as per the Brahmanda Purana. In Matsyapurana she is known as Tripura Bhairavi, Koleshbhaivari, Rudra Bhairavi, Chaitanya Bhairavi and Nitya Bhairavi. Her worship gives the worshipper higher values of life and the Aghoris worship her for their sidhis is Ghorkarma. She is Pranava and this whole world is illuminated by her alone. Her other forms include Sidha Bhairavi, Chaitanya Bharavi, Bhuvaneshwari Bhairavi, Kamleshwari Bhairavi, Shatakuta Bhairavi, Nitya Bhairavi, Koleshi Bhairavi and Rudra Bhairavi. She brings all changes in Nature of the universe. Tripura Bhairav's night is called Kalaratri and her Bhairava is Kala-Bhairava.

Dhumavati, is basically Devi Parvati. Because of her act of devouring Shiva and as a result her body being covered by smoke she is thus called Dhumna. She is the one of the Markandaya Purana fame who tells the demons that her victor will be the one who defeated her in war. This could not happen; she is, hence Kumari, but having devoured Shiva she looks like a widow. Devi Ugrachandi is born of her body; she in this form houls like a thousand jackals. She eats demons. In Swatantra tantra we find Sati's self immolation in Daksha rituals. The smoke born of this act gave birth to Devi Dhumavati. She rids us of ills and sickness. This Devi in the Tantra Tradition is Ugratara, Bhairavi and Tamsi. In the Rigvedic Ratrisukta she is known as 'Sutra', the one who takes us beyond all troubles. She is of stable mind and ravered as incarnation of God.

Dhumavati, Dashamahavidya of Bhairavas
Chamba, A.D. 1782, Bhuri Singh Museum, Chamba

Baglamukhi is the destroyer of enemies of all human beings as she is dressed in yellow colours. She is Vaishnavi; she is Vishnupatani of the Yajurveda. She is Brahmastra. Kundika Tantra and Mundamala Tantra provide us process of her adoration. She is worshipped by the Brahmacharis. Brahma is known to have disclosed her knowledge to sage Sanaka. Parshurama disclosed her to Dronacharya. Sanatakumar gave this knowledge to Narda who passed it over to Sankhayana. Sarkhayana in 36 Chapters wrote the Baglatantra.

Matangi is Lord Shiva's Shakti because he is Matanga. In the Narada Pancharatra we find Shiva described as Chandala and his consort as Chandali—hence Matangi. She is also known as Rajamatangi, Samukhi, Vashya-matangi and Karana matangi. She is in fact knowledge of Saraswati. She sits on a throne studded with gems. The parrots sing to her pleasure. Chadrakala is her ornament. She holds and plays Veena.

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She is in fact Sarswati of Mahavidya.

Kamala is of Bhagvata origin born of great churning (Manthana) of the sea with the purpose of finding Amrita. She is wedded to Lord Vishnu. She is considered the mother supporting the universe. As the most desired goddess by all she is fortune also known as Bhargavi and Tripura.

Dashamahavidyas are the Lord's united power only. These from Kali to Kamla are seen as, Sarishti and Vyashti, Gati, Sathiti, Vistaara, Bharan Poshana, Niyantarana, Janam-marna, Unnati-Avanniti, Bandhana and

Dashamahavidya of Bhairavas Chamba, A.D. 1782,
Bhuri Singh Museum, Chamba

Moksha, i.e. in ten stages translated as creation and destroyal, speed, situation, expansion, sustenance, controlling, life and death, progress and retardation, fetters and lastly emancipation. For, readers interested in further details the Mundamala tantrokta Mahavidya Stotaram is available for recitation and Sadhna.

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Devi in Nava-Durga Concept

Devi Durga's first form is known as Shailaputri. She uses a Bull for her ride and holds trident in the right hand and the lotus flower in her left hand. As daughter of Himalaya she is the one who was born, in her earlier birth, as King Daksha's daughter who offered herself to ritual fire because her father disrespected Lord Shiva. Shrilaputri is Hemavati and Parvati in her other names. She, as Shiva's consort is first among all the Devis and is first as Durga too. Her devotion leads us to Muladhara Chakra of yoga.

Brahmacharini is one devoted to penance and meditation. She holds a beadstring mala in her right hand and a Kamandalu in her left. She in earlier birth was Himalaya's daughter who desirous of obtaining Shiva as her husband went into the stricketest of the procedures of Bhakti and was known as Brahmacharini. For her Lord Shiva's blessings in all form were the only aim of her existence. She, after her penance was renamed Uma. She gives boons and all good in the world. She is placed in Svadhisthana Chakra in yoga. Normally she dresses in white with ornaments of louts flowers.

Chandraghanta gives peace and brings harmony. Her crown is half-moon shaped and her Sadhna leads us to Manipura Chakra. All our sins vanish in her worship. She adorns and rings a bell which is a forerunner of prosperity. She is pure and subtle in spiritual form and yields results of bravery, brotherhood and humility. She is with ten arms and serene face.

Kushmanda is the mother of this universe. All manifest and unmanifest is her creation. She lives in the orbit of the sun and the light in the seven worlds is because of her radiance. She rides a lion. Resides in Anahata Chakra. Her devotion leads to prosperity, happiness and progress all around. She holds kumbha, kundala, bow and arrows, chakra, lotus and gada with a rosary of beads and wears the sun

Devi Enthroned, Guler A.D. 1790-95
Bharat Kala Bhavan, Varanasi

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at the back of her head.

Sakandamata leads a Sadhaka to Vishudha Chakra. She is a four-armed Devi and holds Karitikeya, Skandha in her lap, lotus flowers in two hands and sits on a lotus throne. She is also called Devi Padmasana. She in adoration fulfills all our desires. She rides a brownish lion.

Katyayani came in rebirth from her Paraamba form as sage Katyayana's daughter. She with supreme powers of Lords Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesha killed Mahishasura and had a separate birth as cosmic power. She is the goddess of Brajamandala. She holds a sword and a lotus in her two hands of the left side. Her worship gives all types of happiness, wealth, children and other enjoyments. Her devotion is fruitful in Agya Chakra.

Kalaratri is darkness personified. Her necklace gives lightning shine; she rides a donkey. Also known as Shubhanka, she stays in Sahasrara Chakra which opens our intellect to all devotional and spiritual attainments.

The Devi in Mandala with other divinities

Mahagouri is dressed in white, holds a damru and Trishula and sits on a bull. Four-armed Devi prayed in deep devotion to attain Shiva, as a result she attained dark complexion but a bath in sacred river Ganges purified her to return to her Shubhra (white) form. She provides us all sidhis and purifies our mental corruptions. Remembering her name and selfless devotion to her give us prosperity, peace and emancipation.

Sidhidatri as per the Markandeya Purana gives us sidhis of Anima, Mahima, Garima, Laghima, Prapati, Prakamya, Ihatava and vashitava. As per Devi Purana Lord Shiva in this Devi's devotion obtained all these sidhis which in the Brahmavaivarta Purana are named as 18 Sidhis. She made Shiva Ardhanarishwara. She holds a conch, lotus, gada and chakra and her seat is on the lotus flower. She gives us boons and leads us to emancipation.

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Devi in Mythological Logic

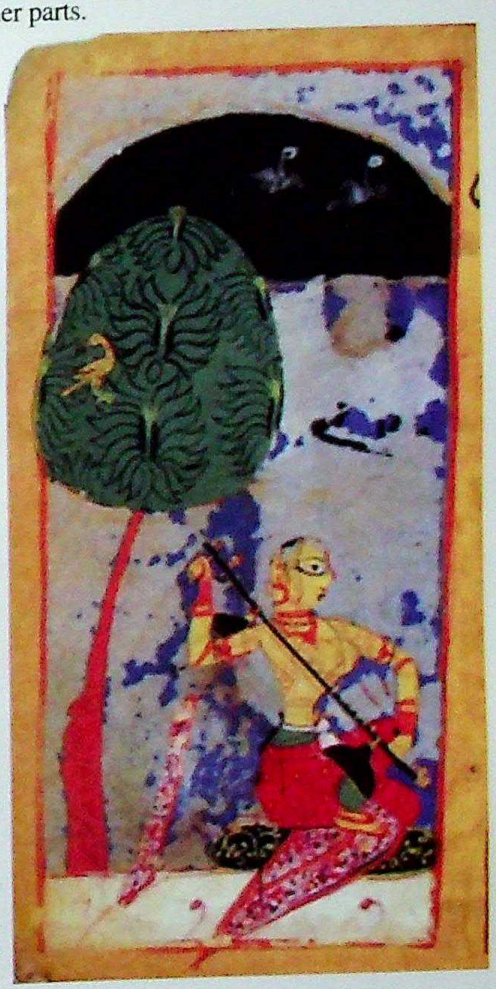
Parvati is Lord Shiva's Adishakti, the original inherited power. She makes the lord Ardhanarishvara and Mrituanjaya. She is Chanda and Munda killer, the Chamunda. Wedded to Lord Shiva she is complete as Devi, all empowered. She is patience, hard work, determination and prosperity. She is the pious-most of all wedded women or the Devis. Lord Rama's wife Sita was her ardent follower. She is the Devi for each household and in fact all other Devis are but her forms and are her parts.

Devi Sita is a woman incarnate. She was Lord Rama's wife. Without her Lord Rama is only his helf being. She is an ideal woman and mother for the Hindus who follow Rama's ways of life. She is chaste and divine in all respects.

Radha is Krishna's Rameshwari. She lives for Krishna and is divine part of Krishna's earthly life. Lord Krishna worshipped her and thus she is Radha. She was born with the brilliance of a thousand moons. Lord Krishna's incarnation was with a purpose, so is Radha's as Raseshvari. Puranic legends have a lot to stress on this divinity. In the Bahmavarata Purana, Lord Krishna and Radha are inseparable, in fact they are one. Radha is love, she is Rasa and without these two factors we can't attain God, the Krishna of our desires.

Without mentioning Shri Ganga, the seared river in Devi form, our effort to know the Devi cult will not be accomplished. This river is born of Lord Shiva's effort as one which covers three words as per the Dharmotra Purana. She is also known as Lord Vishnu's consort only next to the other two wives; Lakshmi and Saraswati. The Skanda Purana gives us the refrence of Ganga's birth and she is lord Vishnu's representative power in Goloka and Vishnuloka. In India, the river Ganges is known as mother goddess, giving us emancipation from the cycle of life and death. The Ganga is Lord's gift to us; all its purifying effect is felt sacred by gods what to say of mortals!

Mother Goddess Durga is main female deity in the Vishnu Purana. Devis Kali, Tara, Chinnamasta, Shrividya, Bhuvneshwari, Bhairavi, Baglamukhi, Dhumavati, Tripura Sundari and Matagi are her forms merely. They are the Dashamahavidyas. Devi Durga, Shatakshi and Shakambhri also are Devis as supreme power of the God. Lord Brahma created Ambika and to kill demons Madhu



Devi as Kumari, Devi Mahatamya, Kangra, A.D. 1574-75

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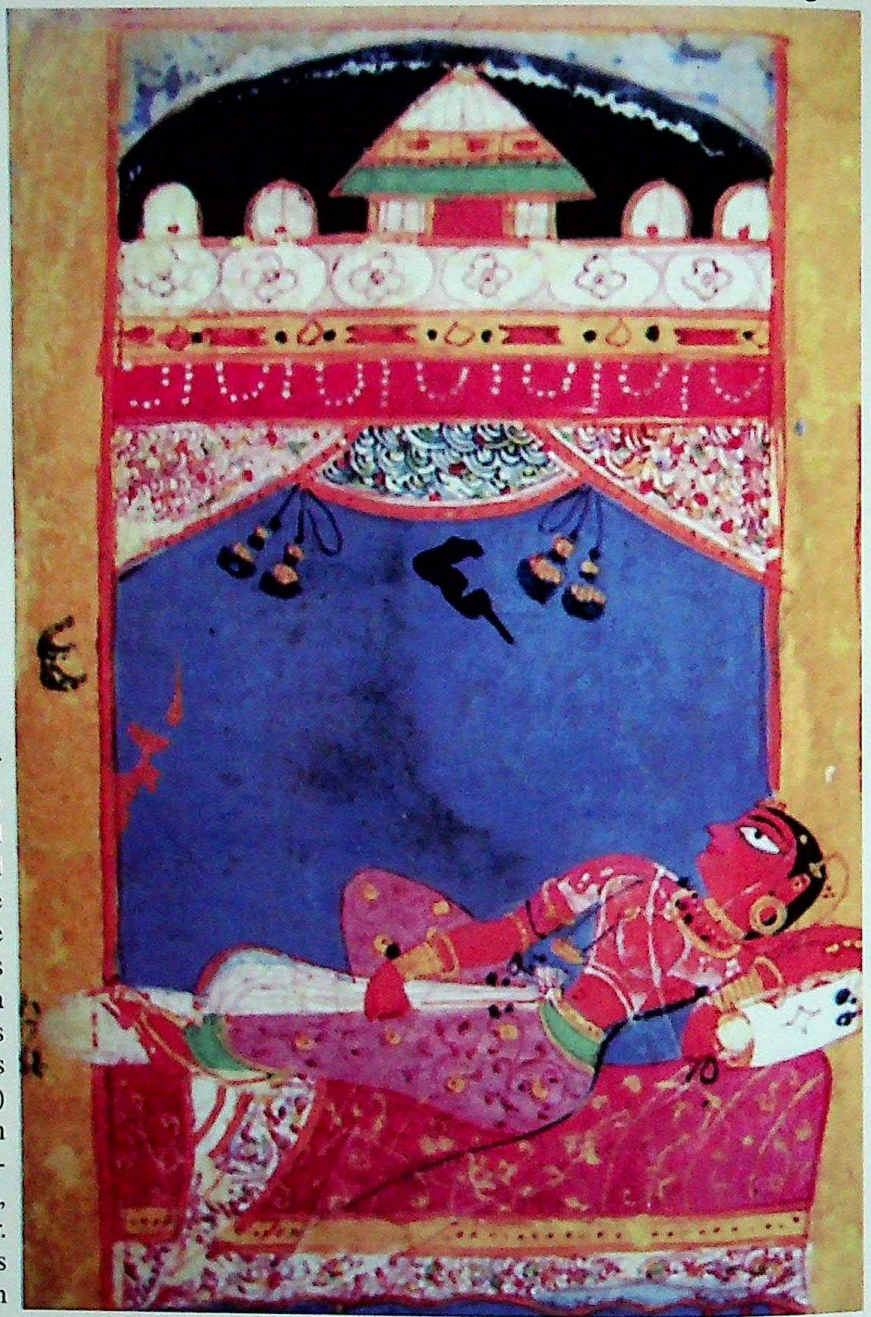
and Kaitabha the Kali took form as Trilokya-Mohini shakti who awakened lord Vishnu from yoganindra. Devi Bhagvati is Lakshmi also. She is Shri and Lakshmi both and in both forms she is wedded to Lord Vishnu. Devi lives in lotus pools, holds lotus in her hands and sits on lotus Asana. In the churning of great sea in search of Amrita by Devas and Asuras, Devi Lakshmi was attained and was handed over to Lord Vishnu. Although in normal course she should have been ordained to be Shiva's consort. This divine lives with Vishnu and is the one who has seen the Lord's Vishvaroopa. Next comes Devi Sarswati, a goddess born of Devi Parvati's Sharirakosha and thus she is Kaushaki and is credited with the extinction of main demons like Shumbha Nishumbha, Dhumralochna etc. Devi is Narayana's consort and appeared on the earth in the form of Puranic river of the same name. She is Bharti, Brahami. She is also Devi of all education and arts.



Devi Kalyani, Devi Mahatamya, Kangra, A.D. 1574-75
Himachal State Museum, Shimla

Devi Gayatri is one of the five forms of Adyashakti; she is Vedmata, Parmeshwari and Savitri being Surya's daughter. She is the goddess of knowledge and science. She rides Garuda as Savitri and represents Vaishnavi power and as Gayatri rides a Bull. She holds Trident, Damru, noose and a bowl. She represents Rudra in the Samaveda tradition, but in all her names this Devi is Lord Brahma's power. She is Chandha (meter) of Rigveda, Gayatrimantra in her intellectual form. She is five-faced. Mukta, Vaidunya, Hema, Neelamani and Dhavla is colour. Her seat is Lotus. She adorns gems in ornaments, has ten hands holding conch, chakra, lotus flower, varda, Abhayamudra, whip, Aukush, white skull and Rudraksha necklace.

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Devi Chandika, Devi Mahatamya, Kangra, A.D. 1574-75
Himachal State Museum, Shimla

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Devi Chamunda, Devi Mahatamya, Kangra, A.D. 1574-75
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Devi Kalajayi being adorned as Narayani, Devi Mahatamya, Kangra, A.D. 1574-75
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Devi Bhuvaneshvari, Devi Mahatamya, Kangra, A.D. 1574-75
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Devi Mahabhairavi, Devi Mahatamya, Kangra, A.D. 1574-75
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Devi Aindari being empowered by Indra, Devi Mahatamya, Kangra, A.D. 1574-75
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Devi Maheshwari, Devi Mahatamya, Kangra, A.D. 1574-75
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Devi Kali and Chandika, Devi Mahatamya, Kangra, A.D. 1574-75
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Devi in Abhayamudra, Devi Mahatamya, Kangra, A.D. 1574-75
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The Devi in Classical Tradition

Kangra and Pahari Miniature Art is rich because of the presence of Devi in a number of manuscripts and series of works dealing with Shakti, the mother of all gods and cosmic powers. Numerous illustrated and illuminated manuscripts appeared between 17th and 20th centuries on Devi Mahatamya, which takes its origin in Markandra Purana. Boston in U.S.A. and Simla in India have important series of Devi Mahatamya painting in their Museum collections.

Devi is Shakti in the Puranas. Shakti represents the energy of Shiva. Philosophically speaking Shiva is the unchanging pure consciousness while Shakti, its changing power appears as mind and matter. Shiva is the silent seer, the static aspect of Brahma, and so inert and without agitation. Shakti is the Kinetic, dynamic, creative and preservative energy of Brahma. Thus, she is the fullest conception of Brahma in all its aspects.

Manuscript illustration, Devi Mahatamya, Guler, Late 19th Century
Kangra Museum of Art, Dharmsala

Though, the worship of Shakti alongwith Shiva became the most important and dominating factor in later Shaivism, in the beginning this goddess enjoyed no important position. No reference, except the one in the Yajurveda, to her is available in the Vedic literature. There too she is associated with Rudra as his sister and is called Ambika (Sakti and Sakta : A.Avalon, p.6). Earliest reference to the concert of Shiva in ancient work is found in the Sutra literature. The Baudhayana Dharma Sutra distinctly calls her 'Rudrapatni' and gives a provision for offering of

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libations to her (Maitrayani upanishada 5. 7-8). By now, she has assumed an independent character, and has acquired the highest position among the goddesses. Epithets like Arya, Bhagavati, Deva-Samkirti are given to her. She is called Mahakali, Mahayogini and Samkhadharini, which shows that she resembeled one of the later Durgas. Her epithet, 'Mahaprithivi' shows that she was in her original form an 'earth goddess'. The other epithet Manogama suggests that her philosiphical aspect also was being developed and she was supposed to be attainable through meditation and yogic practices.

In the Narayana upanishada she has been called Durga while in Kena upanishada we have Uma Hemavati who imparts the knowledge of Brahma to Indra. Shakti became a first grade goddess in the post-vedic literature. In the Ramayana she has a developed individual personality and is constantly worshipped along with Shiva. We have several episodes regarding her in the Ramayana, which later on were elaborately developed in the Puranas. One name given to her is Uma (Ramayana Balakand 35. 16 uttara 4. 28-30, 1632) and she is regarded the daughter of Himalaya. Due to this association with the Himalaya Parvata she came to be called Parvati. Only once she is called Rudrani. (Refer Ramayana Uttara 13.23). Evidently she is not only the consort of lord Shiva but she has an individual and independent personality too. Due to the influence of the doctrine of devotion, her benign aspect became prominent. In her terrible aspect, she was associated with wars and was called Jaya and Vijaya. She was supposed to protect the devotees and to destroy their foes. We find her associated with the slaying of Mahisasura and the demon Kaitaba. She is said to have been born as Yogamaya of Vasudeva.

Silver carving of Devi, Devi cult, Kangra Temple, A.D. 1920-28

In the Bhisma and Virata Parvas of the Mahabharta, new names are coined for Uma. In the Sauptika Parva of the Mahabharta she is represented as 'Kalaratri'. The Shanti Parva associates her with the destruction of the sacrificial jajana of Daksha. The epics depict her in both of her aspects; benign and terrible; she is the vigorous and horrible goddess to look at in her terrible form and as generous and as beautiful wife of Shiva also. With the passage of times both these aspects got amalgamated; when she was worshipped in one of her aspects, the other was also referred to. Such mixture is very evident in the Durga Khanda of Brahma Vaivarta Purana.

In Puranas she is described as a goddess with burning face, sharp teeth and of formidable form; she rides the tiger and has got different weapons in her four, eight or twenty arms. Though in some aspects like Matradeva, she

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is exclusively the consort of Lord Shiva, and in other form as Durga; she represents the energy of all the gods. She exists to destroy all demons on earth.

Perhaps Vaishnavas also worshipped this goddess because she was regarded as energy of Lord Vishnu. We can refer to Brahma Vaivarta Purana where we find reference to this Devi and in one of her aspects she is Ekanamisa or Bhadra, and appears as sister of Vasudeva Krishna.

Devi as Sidhidatri inside the Sanctum, silver carving, Kangra Temple

The Saura Purana represents her as the Jnana-mayi Shakti of Shiva. She is the highest energy which pervades all and is Maya of the Mayin i.e., Maheshwara. In the Vishnu Purana, the primeval energy appears as Mahalakshi. Uma Hemavati who later came to be accepted as Parvati, Shailputri and Girija was the wedded wife of Girisha, who on this account is called Umapati. Devi as his consort is now Maheshwari, Ishani, Sharvani, Mahadevi, Mahakali, Shiva and Shivani. Gauri, originally the wife of Varuna and a campanion of Parvati also appears as one of the forms of Devi Parvati. As Maheshwari she is worshipped with the offerings of Pashubali and Sura. She gained the supreme position on account of her various exploits. She destroyed the demons Mahishasura, Shumbha, Nishumbha, Raktabija, Chanda and Munda. Just as Shiva disturbed the sacrifice of Daksha, this Devi promised to appear again and again to destroy the demons.

By this time philosophical aspect of the Devi was developed and with Shiva as the highest being, the Supreme Lord, Shakti was identified with Prakarti of Samkhya or Maya of the Upanishadas. The followers of the goddess

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tried to find out Vedic support for her worship. In the stotras composed in her devotion and praise she is identified with Saraswati, Savitri, the Shruti and the Vedanta. When Rudra was identified with Agni, an attempt was made to identify her with the tongues of fire. Her identification with Sarswati i.e. Vak Devi made her a source of power since Vak in Brahmana literature was considered a source of strength. As Saraswati she attained the epithets of 'Vedmata' and 'Chhandasammata'.

We must study the energy as female principle of Maheshwara, which has three forms. Parvati is the generous one to whom whole of the universe pays reverence and looks forward to be blessed by her grace. Shiva is Paramapita and Parvati is Mahamata in her various invocations, She is invoked as such and is seen as controller of the Universe and as generator of all forces she is now the benefactor of the universe. In this role she is Shiva Priya, the one loved by Lord Shiva.In her destructive aspect, she is Kali (the destructive one), Karali (the terrible), Bhima, Chandi and Chandika, Chamunda (wrathful), Durga, Shyama and Bhairavi.

Devi as Shailaputri, Parvati, silver carving, Kangra Temple, A.D. 1920-28

As Durga she is beautiful, yellow faced woman riding on a tiger, looking fierce in her menacing posture. As Kali or Kalika, she is represented with a black skin, ugly and repulsive in sight, terrifying having terrible countenance dripping with blood, enricled with snakes hung round her neck, and appears as a fury personified to fight all ills. As Mahamaya she is illusion all.

Chandi Mahatmaya speaks of the Devi under the name Durga (when she receives the messenger of Asuras), Dashabhuja (when she destroys the army of demons), Sinhavahini (when she fights the Chief of Asuras, Raktabija), Mahishamardini (when she kills the Asura in his Buffalo shape), Jagaddhatri and Muktakesi (when she again defeated the army of Asuras). As the killer of Shumbha she is Tara and as goddess Chinnamasta she is the killer of Nishumbha. She is Jagadgauri when she is lauded by the gods for her triumphs.

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In her middle form, she is Uma (light) and a type of beauty—Gouri, Hemavati, Jaganmata and Bhavani. She is called Babharavi, 'Bhagavati, Isani, Ishvari, Kalanyani, Kaushiki, Kirati, Maheshwari, Mrida, Mrdani, Rudrani, Sharvani, Shiva and Trayambaki. From her origin she is called Adrija, Girija, and Dakshaja. She is Kanya, Kanya Kumari (Virgin), Ambika, (the mother), Avara, (the youngest), Avanta Nitya (everlasting), Arya (the revered one) Vijaya (the victorious), Ridhi (the rich), Sati (the virtuous), Dakshina; Vibha (the tauny) Karburi (spotted), Bhramari, Kotari (the naked) Karnamoti, Padmalanchana (distinguished by a lotus), Sarvamangala (always auspicious), Shakambhri (nourisher of herbs), Sivaduti, Simharathi, Bhutankyiki (Chief of the Goblins), Gananayaki (leader of ganaas) Kamakshi (wanton eyed), Kamakhya, Bhadrakali, Bhimarathi, Mahamari, Mahesuri, Matangi, Rajasi and Raktadevi.

Devi as Chandraghanta, silver carving, Kangra Temple, A.D. 1920-28

She is primarily the Consort of Shiva but in some of her aspects such as Bhadra and Shanasha she is regarded as the sister of Vasudeva Krishna. She, as the motivating agency behind gods, like Brahma, Maheshwara etc., was collectively known as the mother in Saptmatrika form. Her association with some abstract qualities and virtues personified also enhanced her position among goddesses. Power, wisdom and stupefying capacity were added to the creative agency to make up the composite picture of a goddess who as Mahalakshami created even gods, as Durga killed Asuras, as Devi revealed the Shakta literature and as Yoganidra sent all creation to sleep. Once installed as supreme deity, Devi or Durga outgrew the terrifying character and her benign nature began to grow in importance.

The description of Devi in the Skanda Purana is not different from the above. Here, too, she has been eulogised in all her aspects. Shakti, the beloved Consort of Shiva, the mother of Ganesha and Skanda represents the creative energy of Brahma, the preserving force of Vishnu and the destructive force of Rudra. The three Lords are called Trimurti. In fact, she is the energy of all gods personified. She has been identified with all other Goddesses (Refer Skanda Purana Prabhasha 119.21, Arbuda 36.33, Nagara Catur 246.29, kashi II 72.42, Aruna II 19.60). Though at one place, she has been specifically associated with Vishnu as his yoganidra and is called Samkha Chakragadadhari, yet her characteristic features primarily make her Lord Shiva's, Consort. Some of her names are only the feminine forms of Shiva's name. Her identification with abstract ideas such as Dhriti, Shuchi, Shanti and Kashama etc., enhance her glory.

She, the four-armed, four-faced, tawny-eyed one is the wielder of bell and is called Hamsayana. Like Lord Shiva she too is associated with terrible ganas, ghosts, goblins and forest dwelling beings of many origins. She is

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called Chatvarapriya, which shows that in this aspect she was worshipped at crossroads. Though she constantly accompanies her Lord Shiva and lives in the Himalayas, her abode is at Meru and the Vindhya mountains also.

Like Shiva, she too has been eulogised both in her terrible as well as benign aspects. She is Chandika, Chamunda and Chandrupa in her revenge and is credited with the annihilation of the Universe, gods and Kala (Time space) even and is called Kalaratri. Her ferocity is perhaps due to her identification with Agni (fire) flames. In her adorable benign rupa she is full of compassion and is known as Kalyani, Kshmakari, Mangla Gauri and Amrita. She rules and protects the world. She is worshipped by all as the abode of all Mangalas and brings prosperity and success to the believer. She looks after yoga and Kashema of her devotees and removes their calamities, fulfills their wishes and grants them boons.

Devi Chandika the 10 headed, 10 armed and 10 legged Devi, in an unconventional silver carving at Kangra Temple, A.D. 1920-28

The Devi's exploits are praised in detail in the Skanda Purana. She adopts different forms to slay the demons. She protects the gods by fresh incarnation of her godly self and destroys the tormentors. She as Chamunda, slayed Shumbha and Nishumba, as Katyayani killed Mahesha, as Srimata destroyed Kalayavana, as Kalisvari slayed Andhaka and as Ekanamsha helped Lord Krishna to slay Kamsa. The Skanda Purana speaks of her in different mainfestations as Rudrani, i.e., Mangla, Vatamula, Vimla, Sarvamangla, Ardhamshini, Lamba, Kalaratri, Marichika, Jayamangala, Mahika, Parvati, Ambika, Gauri, Kaushiki, Katyayani and so on. The Purana alludes her association with sacrifice and asceticism. She is identified as the mother of the Vedas and is not different form Onkar, Gayatri, Vyahrtis, Svaha, Svadha, Vasat and Vausat.

Philosophically speaking she is conscious Prakriti of Skamkhya and Parashakti of Nirgun Brahma. She is said to be stationed in the form of twenty-three categories (of Shamkhya) and is Vyakta, Avyakta, Tanmatras etc. But she herself is beyond the Sattva, Rajas and Tamas.

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As creator of all beings, she is all-prevading in manifest and unmanifest world. All movable and immovable is stationed in her. For her there is no sorrow, no pain; she is partless, whole, gross, subtle, formless, maniformed, highest, higher than the highest, the bestower of fourfold aim and beatitude; above all she is represented as Mahamaya and Brahamavidya.

Different forms of the Goddess

Devi of the Puranas is, in fact, a compound of several divine forms. These forms are not incarnations but rather epithets descriptive of her appearance or method of fighting at different times. One set, Uma and Ambika belong to the wife of Rudra where Devi is an ordinary woman manifested with all female virtues. The other set, i.e., Kali etc. carry us back to the wife of Agni, and we meet Durga the most powerful warrior. Gauri is Vedic Nirti, the goddess of all evils. Uma always remained as a minor deity, though later on the famous Durga Sapthshati or the Markandeya Purana portion of Devi Mahatamya extolled her exploits and her name was glorified in other Puranas too.

Eighteen Armed Devi Bajreshwari in silver carving, Kangra Temple, A.D. 1920-28

Sati or Parvati represents the benevolent aspect of the goddess. Sati is the virtuous and devoted wife who immolated herself to vindicate the honour of her husband. She is an ideal wife pleasing Lord Shiva in her delightful company and sweet conversation. Felicity of their domestic life is eulogised at great length in many Puranas. They are an ideal couple representing faithfulness to each other. Devi is fond mother, prudent, yet assertive wife, wise and childlike.

Kaushiki and Katyayani are Devis worshipped by the sages of Kaushika and Katya clans. Bhavani is another name for Kali. The name Rudrani is not found in literature till the period of the Sutras. Ambika of the Vajasaneyi Samhita is Rudra's sister and not his wife. She became the supreme object of worship in the Shakti cult much afterwards.

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The Devi, Shakti or Durga is a composite deity. Different goddesses who owed their conception of different historical conditions were afterwords identified with one goddess (Ref. Vaishnavism Shaivism and minor Religious systems. Bhandarka pp. 143-144). Some of these goddesses were certainly of non-Aryan origin. One of them was worshipped in the Sindhu valley civilization. When Rudra assimilated the Sindhu Valley horned God, it was identified with Vedic Ambika. Change in relation, in case of Ambika, is not surprising. The identification of the two goddesses becomes easily acceptable as mother due to their connections with fertility.

One form of Devi is called Vindhya Vasini. On one hand she is the consort of Shiva and on the other she is virgin. Vindhya Vasini consumes wine, meat and prefers Pashubali and her form is not very attractive as deity. None of these features belonged to Vedic Ambika or Sindhu valley goddess. The Brahma Vaivarta Purana clearly declares that Durga was worshipped in many villages and was called Gramadevta. Vindhya Vasini falls in the category of a goddess who had assimilated most of the local goddesses who came to be regarded as different manifestations.

Devi as Kamalani, silver carving, Kangra Temple, A.D. 1920-28

Durga is Puranic in form. (the Skandapurana refers to Navadurgas, i.e., Kali Katyayani, Ishani, Chamunda, Mundamardini, Bhadrakali, Bhadra Tvarita and Vaishnavi - ref. Kedara Kh. 3.50) The Ratrisukta of the Khila portion of the Rigveda calls Ratridevi by the name of Durga. She is same as the tongues of Agni called Kali, Karali etc. The Brhaddevata (II-79) says that Aditi, Vak, Saraswati and Durga are one and the same. Though called energy of Shiva, she is said to have originated from the mouths of different gods for the destruction of Mahishasura. She is called Vindhyacalakrtalaya i.e., having her habitat in the Vindhya mountains. She is called Durga as she killed a demon of that name. She represents the aweful aspect of the Consort of Shiva and enjoys a position equal to that of Shiva.

In Devi Mahatamya or Durga Saptshati Section of the Markandya Purana, this Devi appears to be a Vaishnavite

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energy more than a Shivite one. Perhaps the Shiva-Shakti cult was a unity of two originally independent faiths and Durga had already been so re, ·atedly extolled that it was not possible to bring her into a completely subservient relation to Shiva.

Just as Parvati was differentiated into Durga, Chamunda, Mahishamardani and Mahalakshmi, so also Chamunda was herself viewed under three forms— of Karali or Bhadrakali, Kalabhadra, and Kali or Mahakali. Kali is figurative expression of a highly philosophical concept of Brahma representing all the great divine attitibutes. Shiva as the God of destruction is identical with the all-devouring 'Kala' and his distinguishing colour is white. In contrast to him, Kali represents the dark abysmal void which is above time, space and causation. She is the most formidable aspect of the consort of Lord Shiva who is said to have destroyed Kala (the God of death/time in cosmic interpretation) itself. She is the goddess of non-Aryan origin, a relic of aboriginal savagery incorporated in Hinduism as the personification of destruction.

Devi as Kushmanda in original seven forms in the battle field, silver carving, Kangra Temple, A.D. 1920-28

The Puranas describe many minor female deities called Matrikas. The Matrikas are invoked by Pashubali and Madirapan and they are pleased at Tantric rituals. Brahmanism never approved of such practices. In the Brahmavairta Purana it is told that when Vishnu requested Shiva to make Devi his wife, he not only refused but condemned the demand. Uma and Aparna of the Puranas are widely accepted Devis in Dravadian culture too. Aparna is Digambari and the rituals relate her to *Nagana Sabaras* mentioned in the Brihtsamahita as one of the two branches of Sakaras.

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The Devi We Worship

Devi Mahatamya in Durga Saptashati consists of 700 Shlokas, also known as mantras. Whole of Devi Mahatamya is chanted on sacred occasions in India where the Devi cult prevails especially during Navaratri of both the ayanas. Chanting of Durga Sapthshati is proceeded by Dhyana or meditation on Chandika. Argala-stotra, Kilaka-stotra and Devi Kavcha and Aparadha-Kshamapana-stotra and Devi Sukta at the end. This is part of the Parayana. The Hindus recite Durga Sapthashati or Chandi Path daily. Cantos LXXXI to XCIII, totalling 13 of the Markandya Purana form the Devi Mahatmya. We have A.D. 1899 version of Pargiters translation in English in addition to Manmathnath Dutta's translation from Calcutta for readers interested in understanding the Saptshati.

Devi is not a female goddess but God himself as mother, this was what Shri Rama Krishna preached. My purpose in going for serious view and Devi concept is based on the Skanda Purana which provides the source for even the Markandya Purana and the Devi cult development in India. The Pahari miniature paintings have seriously followed the cantos of Markandya and the Skanda Puranas and the Paintings on these texts are examples of high quality of art.

The Devi in Pahari art is best portrayed in Basohli Tantrik and Kangra Devi Mahatmya series. The Markandya Purana has inspired the artists to paint the Devi with four, eight, sixteen and eighteen arms and hands. She holds different type of weapons and adorns herself with various attributes which include: sword, discus, lotus, trident, shield,

Silver carving of Devi as Bhuvenshvari, Kangra Temple, A.D. 1920-28

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bow, bell, noose, crescent moon. As Kali she is provided with a skull cup, several heads and various weapons. In the mandala paintings of Devi we find the goddess with twenty arms. At places she is six-armed also when seated in mandala. In Tantrik series the four-armed goddess has lotus, goad, bow and noose. As Rajarajeshwari she is four-handed wearing the crescent moon on her brow and holds lotus flowers. As Sumukhi four-armed she adorns besom, shears, lota and a bowl. She is often shown seated on Shiva, the Sarva in nude; she is dressed in red garments, wears garland of gunja seeds; she is fair-faced and is a symbol of giver of supreme delight, all success.

Devi Bhuvaneshvari is four-armed. She is shown normally holding elephant goad and noose, vara and abhiti mudras, enthroned. She has a smiling face; with high firm breasts and she wears a bright crown, adorned with moon sometimes has been shown with three eyes. She is like the risen sun, lovely and victorious.

Ashtabhuja Devi, Kangra Temple, A.D. 1920-28

The Devi as Baglamukhi is two-armed. She holds pestle and a purse and is seated on a lion. Her garments are yellow. She is decorated with jewels and garlands. She holds a club in a threatening manner wielding the power as Shakti.

Dhumavati enjoys ride on a carriage drawn by two crows; her distinction is her crow-banner and she holds a smoking bowl and an abacus in her two-handed appearance. The Devi is discoloured, unsteady, wearing dirty garments with no ornaments; she appears as a miserable widow. Her breasts are loose. Her nose is swollen. She looks frowning, crooked and murderous, suffering from hunger and thirst. She is always inspiring fear and instigating quarrels.

The Devi as Chinnamasta holds in her left hand her own head. She appears in a decapitated form as goddess. At places she is accompanied by two other Devis. She stands above Kamadeva and Rati on an expanded lotus.

The Markandya Purana paintings of Kangra Pahari of the early nineteenth century are based on the story

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element and provide us with detailed versions of Shlokas in colour. Himalayan landscape is dominant. But in the Devi Mahatamya paintings of A.D. 1594-75 not only the style is distinct but also the colours used are superior and the quality of the work is par-excellence. Each page of the Devi of Himachal State museum Simla has unique borders and figures of different imagination as compared to the Tantrika or Kangra versions of 18th century. Although this set is known to have been written and painted in the 16th century end, yet my feeling is that this work should be treated as distinct and special to the extent that a close examination may disclose its earlier origin. We

Devi as Kali, ancient statue of Devi as Bhadrakali at Kangra Temple, 6th Centruy A.D.

don't have dated evidence to support any definite date; I have an intuition that this set belongs to the sixteen century circa 1574-1575 A.D. But the mention of Asta, Guna, rasa, Indu need to be re-interpreted as A.D. 1552 where Tapasya (Month of Phalgun) had a Thursday with full moon. My purpose in printing the complete set with small pictures enlarged will give ideas to my friends in the art world to study these works with a fresh and open mind. The uniqueness of the colours and accuracy, fineness and maturity of brush is indicative of a class much different from other works on the Markandeya Purana's Devi Mahatamya.

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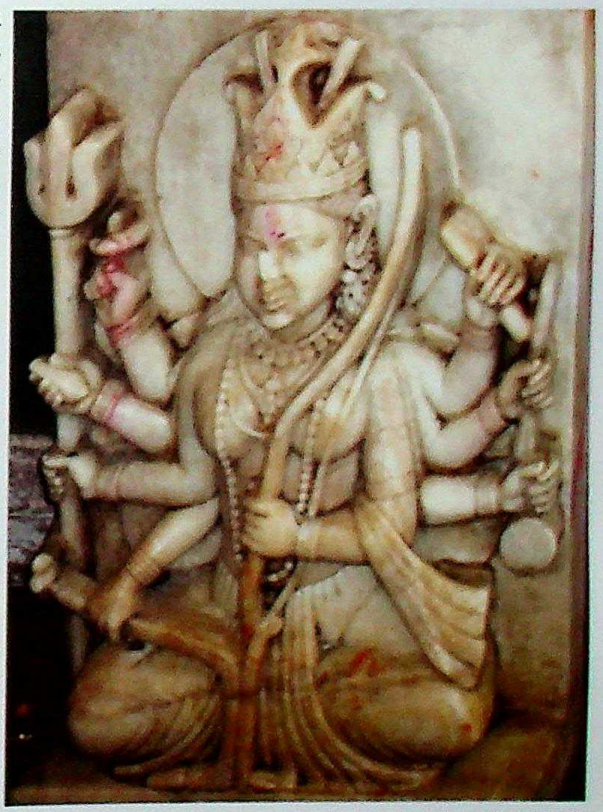
The Goddess Durga

The First narration of story of Durga's exploits was given by sage Medhas to Raja Suratha and the Vaishya Samadhi. The Gods and demons had continued feud and struggle for about a 100 years ultimately resulting in the defeat of the gods by the demons under the leadership of Mahisasura (the Buffalo demon) who expelled them from heaven and usurped their functions. From the wrath of gods, Devi Durga was born and she was armed with various emblems and weapons belonging to various gods. Her roaring laughter filled the whole sky with thundering sounds. On hearing this sound Mahisasura sent his army to attack her, but the Devi defeated the demons and in great carnage killed them. The earth became imperishable from the chariots, horses and elephants fallen on the battlefield, and there flowed a river of blood everywhere.

Mahisasura assuming a buffalo shape attacked Durga in revenge. He threw up large mountains with his horns and roared and rent the earth, and the ocean struck by his tail overflowed. Durga caught him in a lasso, but he assumed the shape of a lion. Defeated again he became a man, then an elephant and finally a buffalo again. Durga placed one foot on his neck and pierced him with her trident. The demon, overpowered by the Devi, was killed with a sword of the goddess by cutting off his head.



Devi Chandraghanta, Kangra Temple, A.D. 1930-32

The second story is about the demons Shumbha and Nishumbha who conquered the earth and expelled the thirty gods from their realm. They approached the Devi for help and protection. In the meanwhile, Chanda and Munda, the two subordinates of the demon king saw the divine beauty in Devi and reported to their master, and instigated the demon to take her as wife. Shumbha sent a messenger to the Devi where she was seated on the Himalaya and communicated to her his master's wishes. She sent back the answer that only one who conquered her in battle would be her husband.

The demon king first sent his general Dhumralochana, but the goddess turned him to ashes by her breath. Devi's face became ink-coloured, and from her wrinkled front eminated 'Kali' 'the black goddess' of terrifying appearance. She attacked a host of demons and devoured wholesale elephants, horses, chariots and men. Finally she slew Chanda and Munda, the great beasts, and took the severed heads to Devi Durga who gave her the name Chamunda. Kali requested the Devi Durga to

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kill Shumbha and Nishumbha with her own hands. Shumbha sent fresh army to fight the Devi Durga from each of the gods issued his Shakti (female energy) similar in appearance and attributes to her male counter part. Brahmani riding on a goose, Maheshwari on a bull, Kaumari on a peacock, Vaishnavi on a Garuda, Aindri on an elephant, Varahi on Narsimha. A terrible battle ensued, in which the demon Raktabija was most prominent fighter on the demon side. In vain the Shakti of gods tried to destroy him. Every drop of blood from his wounds, became a new demon, as soon as it fell on the soil of the earth. The gods were seized with terror, when they saw this miracle filling the whole earth with demons. At this juncture Durga directed Kali to intercept the blood drops and swallow them before they took the shape of demons. Devi slew Raktabija and the Shaktis danced, drunk with the blood of the great demon.

Ancient Statue of Devi Varahi, Kangra Temple, 6th Centruy A.D.

Now Shumbha and Nishumbha attacked the Devi. After a gigantic battle Nishumbha was killed first which encouraged Durga to fight Shumbha, first on land and then in the air. At last she pierced his breast with the trident and he fell shaking the earth with its oceans, islands and mountains. Calm prevailed in the whole world and the sky became purified. The rivers followed the original courses. Gentle winds flew and the sun was of good splendour. The gods praised Durga and asked for a boon from her, namely that she would always free the known three worlds from distress and destroy their enemies. The goddess promised that whenever demons caused trouble, she would be born again to destroy them.

The Devi's exploits as told in the story related by sage Medha to Raja Suratha and Vaishya Samadhi resulted in the two worshipping the Devi's image to obtain fulfillment of their wishes. After the three years spent in sacrifice and asceticism, the goddess appeared to them and granted their prayer. The King Suratha regained his kingdom and the Vaishya, the trader attained supreme wisdom. The Chamba miniatures of Devi series are exclusive despite the fact of other series of the Devi Mahatmya of much earlier dating. Chamba museum collection has 27 paintings

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listed. Devi paintings of Lahore Museum, Chandigarh and Boston add glamour to the Devi Mahatamya series. The Guler works have their own originality and detail. The Shimla collection needs the support of Devi Saptshathi series of all Pahari idoms to provide meaning to commentary on the Mantra-Shlokas of the Markandeya Purana.

The Devi, Kangra, Tara temple, 6th Century A.D.

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Devi Bhagvati, Guler, A.D. 1720-45
Bharat Kala Bhawan, Varanasi

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DEVI MAHATAMYA, MARKANDEYA PURANA

Sanskrit Text

KANGRA, A.D. 1574-75
Himachal State Museum, Shimla

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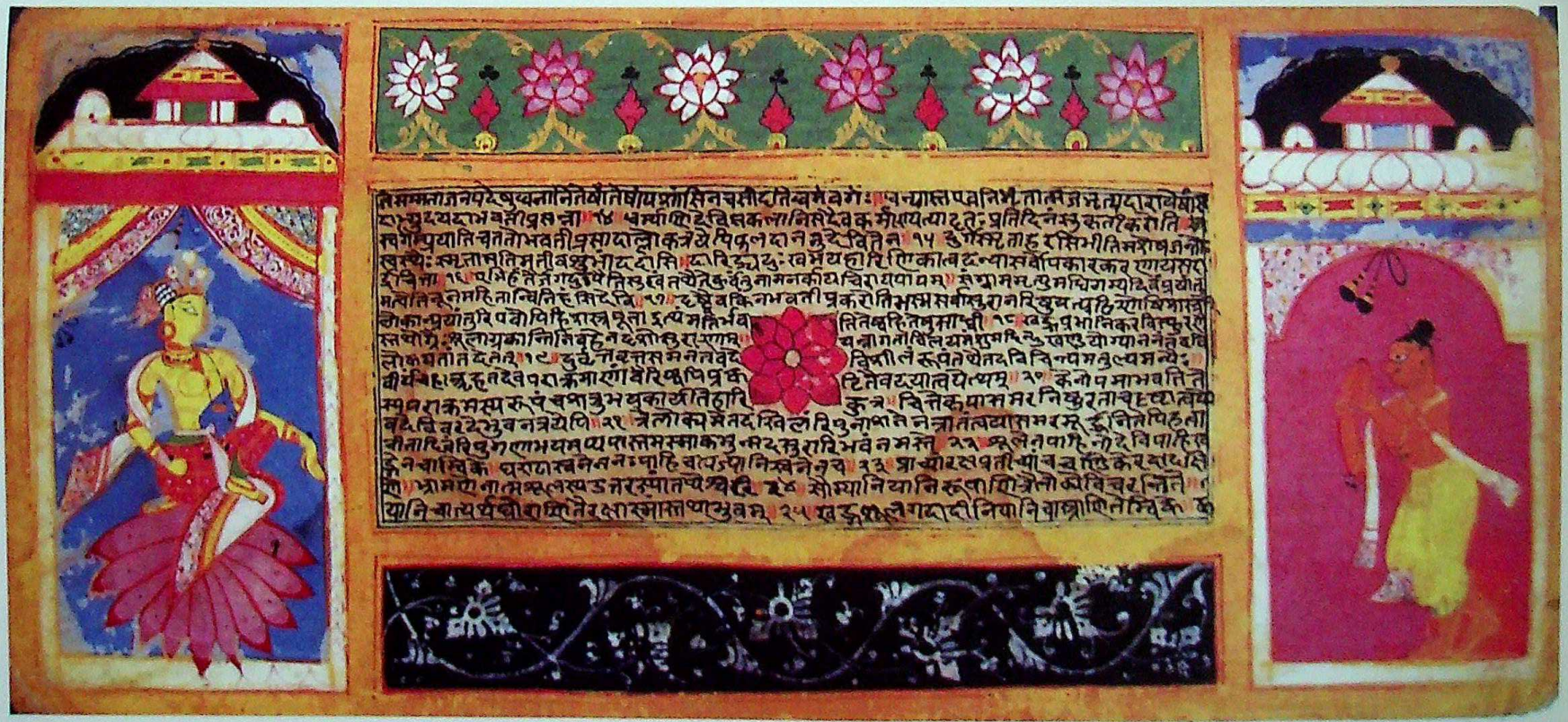

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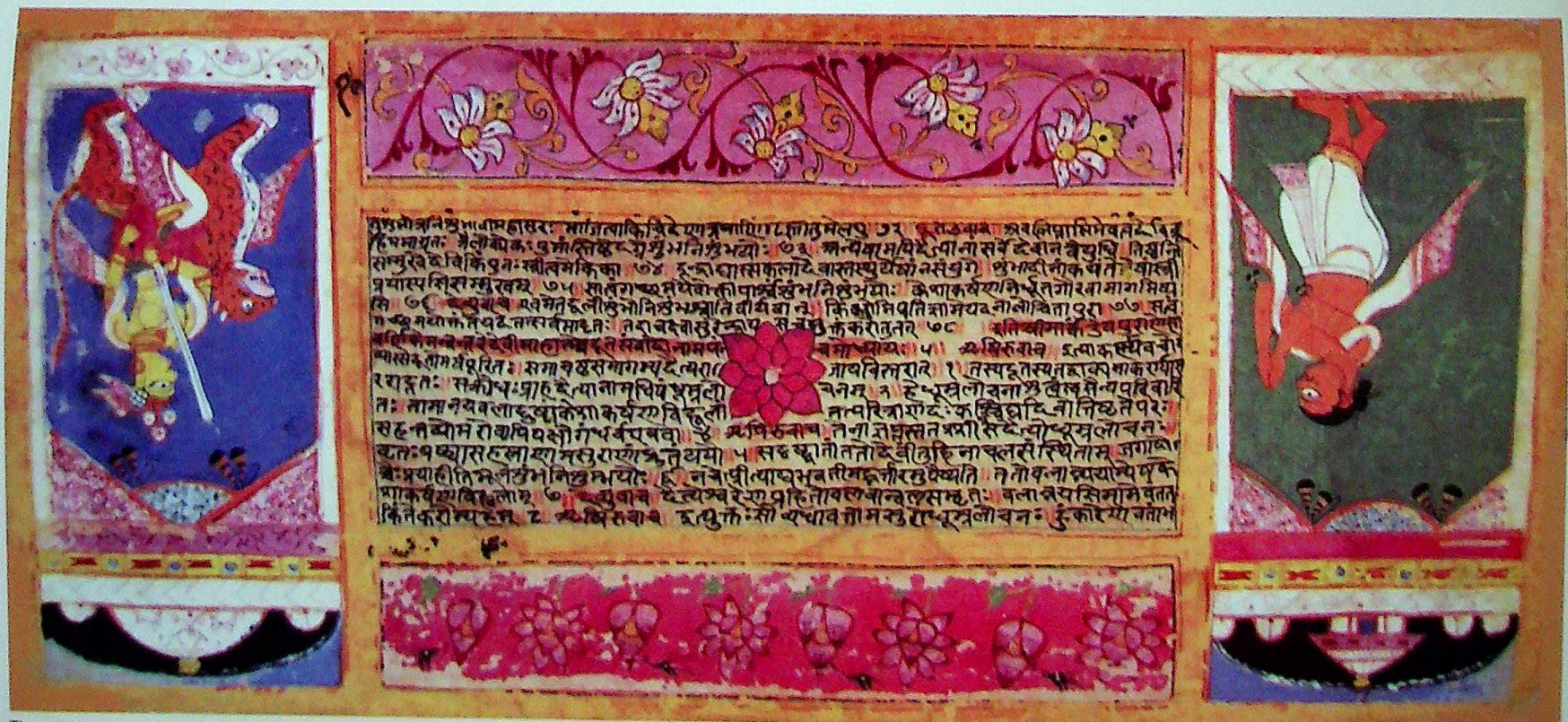

The paintings are up side down in the orignal script

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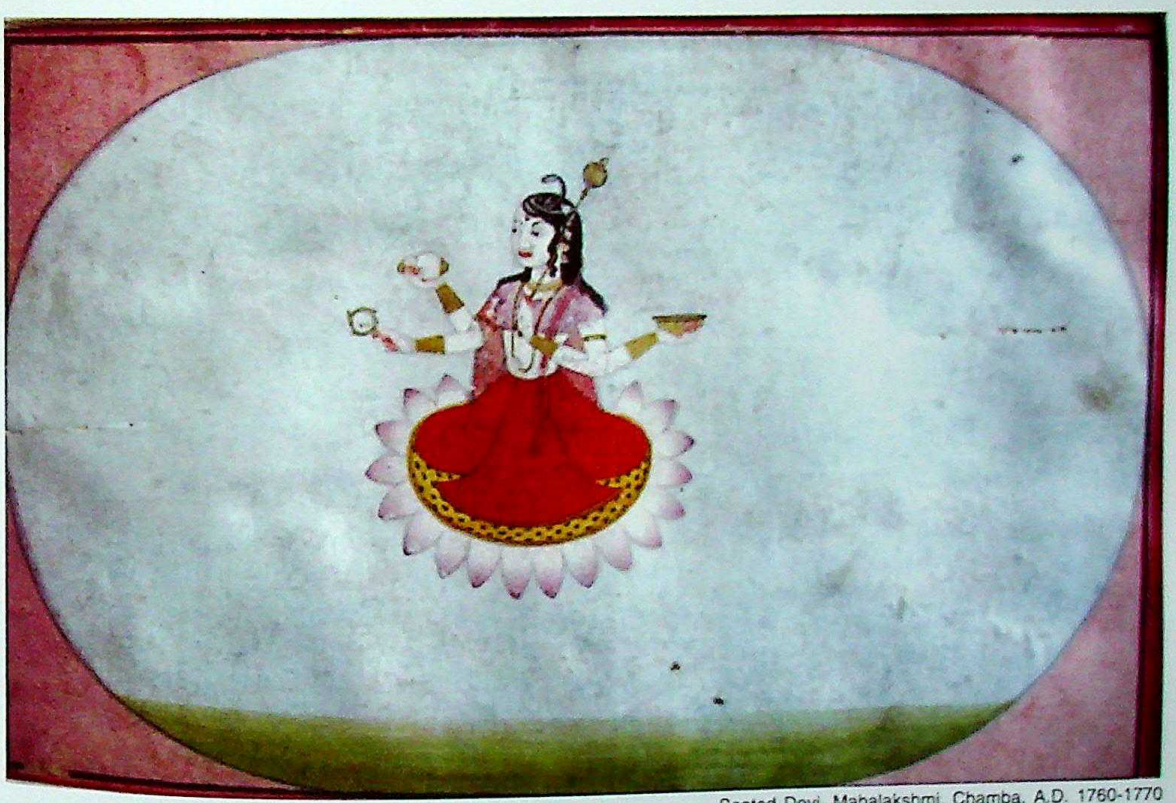
Devi Mahatamya : Markandeya Purana

The Devi is a Puranic concept but we know that the Rigdeva calls Ratridevi by the name of Durga which is not different from Aditi, Vaka and Saraswati being Shiva's energy. In this chapter we will discuss Durgasaptashati of the Markandeya Purana which appears to be a Vaishnavite Devi scripture more than a Shaivite one. Here Chandipatha, Durga-Mahatamya or Durga-Saptashati all three are the same with different names. This great compilation has 13 chapters and 700 Shlokas. We meet the mother, the Devi as **Mahakali** (chapter I) **Mahalakshmi** (chapters II and IV) and **Mahasaraswati** (chapters V to VIII). In India, the Hindu Religious society of Shakta cult adorns the Saptashati as a sacred book and its chanting in whole during Navratri



Seated Devi, Mahalakshmi, Chamba, A.D. 1760-1770
Bhuri Singh Museum, Chamba

and other occasions is sacred to us. Scholars have added Dhyana i.e., meditation on Chandika, Argala-stotra, Kilaka-stotra and Devi-Kavacha as a prayer and praise to the Devi. Also in the beginning of the Sanskrit text we have to recite Aparadha-Kshmapana-Stotra, a hymn pleading for forgiveness for all our sins and wrong

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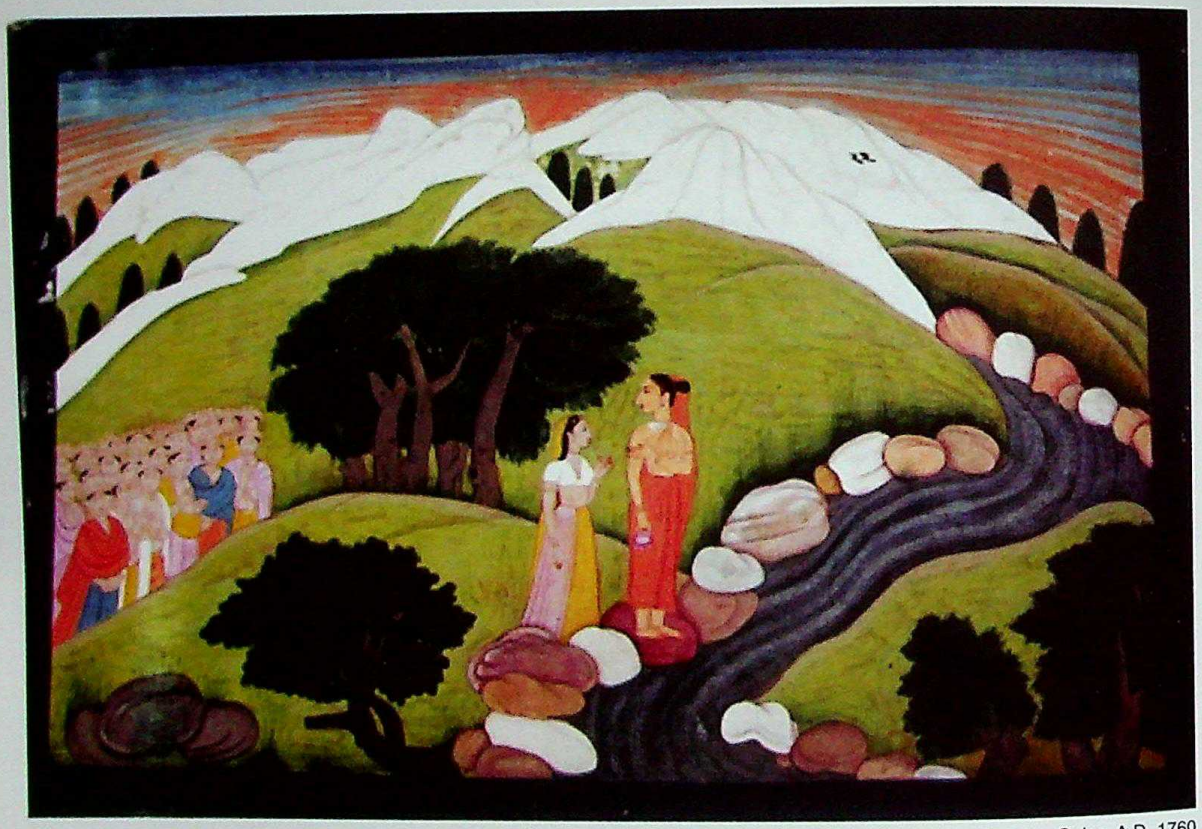
doings including omissions. The Saptashati ends with Devi Sukta. We find variations in different worship patterns.

Saptashati is widely popular in Bengal and Himalayan Hills of India and Nepal. Its English translation was rendered by Bengali scholar Manmathanath Gupta. English scholars F.E. Pargiter's translation of the Markandeya Purana provides us Devi Mahatamya in centos LXXXI to XCIII of this great Purana. Shivadatta Mishra Shastri has given us Bhaskar Tika i.e., Hindi translation of very high quality.

In India, we call on God as Devi or mother and Saptashati is part of our religious life. I must mention the



The Devas Worshipping Devi Kaushiki, Markandeya Purana, Guler, A.D. 1760
Govt. Museum and Art Gallery, Chandigarh

contribution of Ramakrishna Mission in popularizing Devi as mother but it need also be mentioned that Devi temples in Kangra hills and Duggar regions have also contributed in popularizing the Devi Mahatamya.

The text of the Devi Mahatmaya opens with meditation of Mahakali as follows :

Om, I resort to Mahakali, who has ten faces, ten legs and who holds in her hands the attributes of sword, disc, mace, arrows, bow, club, spear, missile, human head and conch. The Devi has three eyes, she is adorned with ornaments on her parts of the female body and luminous she is like a blue jewel and whom Brahma extolled in order to destroy Madhu and Kaitabha, when Lord Vishnu was in his mystic sleep.

Sage Markandelya says to his discipline Krasutuki Bhaguri, "Savarni son of Surya is called the eighth Manu. Listen, while I describe in detail about his birth and show how this illustrious son of Surya became the Lord of the 8th Manvantra by the grace of (Devi) Mahatmaya." 1-3

(In Pahari paintings Savarni was painted as king Suratha of Second Manvantara. He, the son of Surya and his wife Savarna lived in various earlier cycles of creation of this universe.)

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(The period ruled over by one Manu is called a Manvantara. In all, till today we have fourteen Manvantaras. I am giving the names for those who follow the belief of universe created and recreated. These are: Svayambhava, Svarocisa, Uttama, Tamasa, Raivata, Casuka, Vaivasvata, Savarni, Daksha-Savarni, Brahma-Savarni Dharma-Savarni, Rudra-Savarni, Deva-Savarni and Indra-Savarni.)

In earlier times a king named Suratha of Cactra dynasty (formed by first son of Svarocisa) ruled over the whole world. He was protector of his masses and loved them like his own children. The masses were form neighbouring aboriginal race of Kolas and Suratha was opposed by the Kings who were destroying Kolas.

Lord Vishnu in Yoganidra with Lord Brahma seated in Lotus with demons Madhu and Kaitabha approaching, Devi Mahatamya of Markandeya Purana, Guler, A.D. 1760

Suratha fought battles for his neighbouring subjects but lost to the enemy and had to retreat to his domain where he was attacked by powerful anemies, leaving him bereft of any strength, treasury and army. His ministers were vicious and evil-disposed towards him. The King Suratha deprived of his sovereignty had a pretext of hunting in disgust and went to dense forests on a horseback where he found the hermitage of Rishi Medhas—the supreme dvija who lived with his disciples in the woods inhabited by peaceful wild animals. Suratha was welcomed by the sage and he spent some days in the hermitage. (4-11)

Despite his retirement to the woods he was overcome with the attachment of the past lived and thought of the capital of his ancestors which was perhaps not properly guarded by his ministers of evil conduct. He thought of his royal elephant, heroic deeds and the treacherous followers whom he trusted, but now they all served his enemy kings. He thought of his treasures guarded under his great care being squandered by the people who had improper priorities in expenditure, doing no good to the masses. (12-16)

The king was always worried about what he had left behind. One day in the hermitage of the sage he saw a merchant who also appeared depressed in mind and afflicted with grief. King Suratha's kind words assured the merchant who related his own tale of misery to the king. The merchant's sons and wife had played wicked

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to him through the greed of wealth and misappropriated his wealth and having been cast out by all trusted kinsmen, the merchant came to this forest to live in discard. Despite his misfortune the merchant still thought of his wife and sons and their welfare and good and evil. The name of this merchant was Samadhi. (20-25)

King Suratha asked the merchant as to why were his mind and heart affectionately attached to those covetous folks, his sons, wife and others who were the cause of his present misfortune. The merchant said that he thought of his attachment without any meditation. On king's kind enquiry, the merchant talked about his soft mind for its being prone to love even towards worthless kinsmen who were the cause of his heavy sighs and dejection. The merchant showed his helplessness in training his mind to hard thoughts even for the unloving ones. (26-34)

King Suratha and merchant Samadhi together approached the sage Medhas and with proper respect shown by them to the sage they sat down and had conversation with the great soul. The king touched the subject of his own and merchant's sorrow and asked the sage, "Both he and I, drawn by attachment toward objects whose defects we know, are exceedingly unhappy." He talked of delusion that beset them both, and blinded they both were in respect of discrimination. (35-45)

The sage explained the cause.....every being has the knowledge of objects perceivable by the senses. An object of sense reaches it in various manners. Some creatures are blind by day, others are blind by night, some beings have equal sights both by day and night. Human beings are certainly endowed with knowledge, but they

Vishnu slays Madhu and Kaitbha, Devi Mahatamya, Chamba A.D. 1760-70
Bhuri Singh Museum, Chamba

are not the only beings to have knowledge endowed to them because cattle, birds, animals and all living creatures have objects of senses and they also cognize. But delusion creates problems. There is no difference in eating and sleeping manners, and also men, birds and beasts do possess same type of knowledge. Look at the birds who suffer hunger themselves but are engaged in dropping food into the beaks of their offsprings without any desire, whereas human being have attachment because of the greed for return help. We can see this, yet we are

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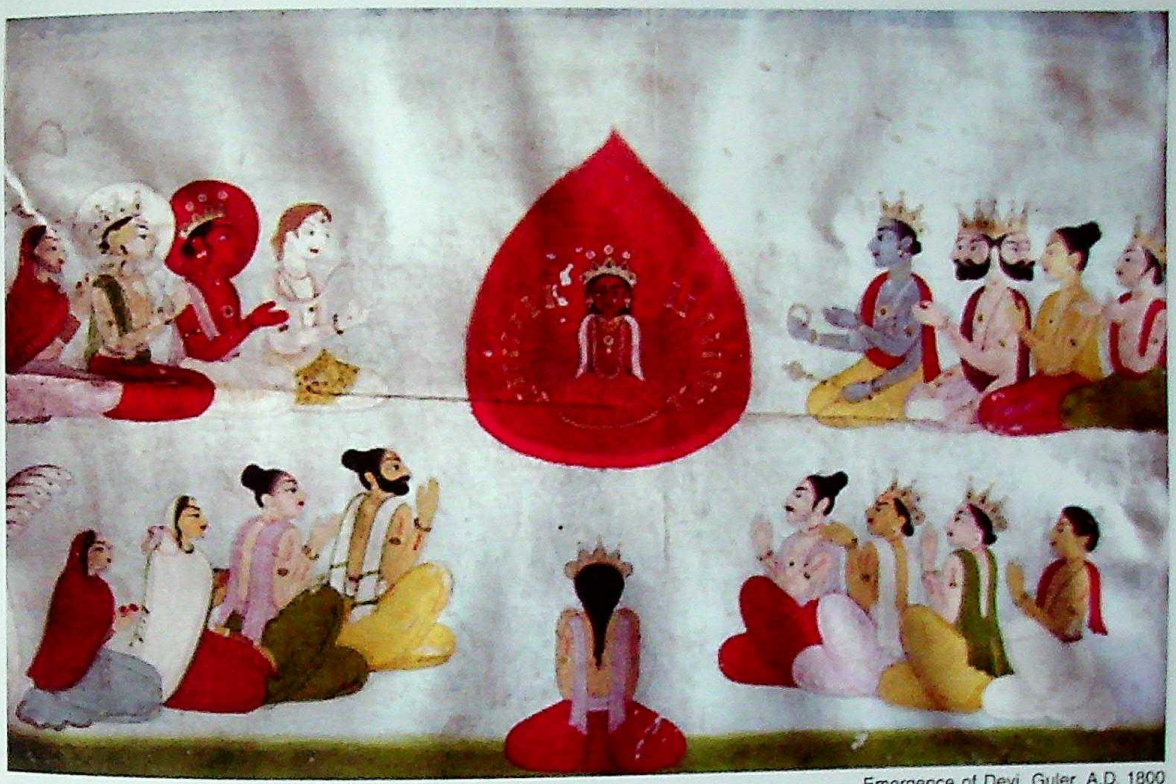
all hurled into the whirpool of attachments because this delusion is caused by the power of Mahamaya (the Great illusion) without which, this world can't exist. This Mahamaya is 'Yoganidra' i.e., tamsic power of Vishnu, the Lord of the universe. Yoganidra deludes us and the whole world. Verily, she, the Devi, the Bhagvati, Mahamaya can draw the minds of even the wise and throw them into delusion. She creates this entire universe, manifest and unmanifest both and it is she who, when propitious, becomes a bestower of boons to human beings for their final liberation. She is supreme knowledge, the cause of our freedom from the cycle of life and death, and eternal,



Emergence of Devi, Guler, A.D. 1800
Bhuri Singh Museum, Chamba

she is the cause of the bondage of transmigration and is sovereign over all lords. 50-58

The king wants to know the Devi, the Mahamaya, her origin, her field and sphere of action, constitution of her nature, her form, and prays to the sage to enrich him with this great Mahamaya of the Hari. 59-62

Without a Guru who knows the Brahman (the Lord) this secret cannot reach the human mind. The sage is Guru who knows and informs the two souls sitting in front of him that the Mahamaya is eternal, embodied as universe. She pervades the universe yet she incarnates herself manifold with a purpose in order to accomplish the purposes of the devas. She is eternal yet born in this world.

The sage illustrates at the end of a Kalpa (an aeon) when this universe was only water because of the great Pralaya, the deluge, and Lord Vishnu stretched out on Sesha took to mystic slumber, two asuras, the giants, notorious Madhu and Kaitabha, sprung into beings from the wax of Vishnu's ear, sought to slay Brahma, the creator of universe, the father of the human beings who was sitting in the lotus over the navel of Lord Vishnu. Seeing these two giants and Lord Vishnu, the Janardana asleep, and with a motive to awakening Hari, Brahma, with concentrated mind, extolled Yoganidra, dwelling in Hari's eyes. The resplendent Brahma extolled the unique, incomparable all pervading Goddess of Vishnu, Yoganidra, the queen of Cosmos, the supporter of the world, the cause of the sustentations and dissolution. 63-71

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Brahma said to Yoganidra, "You are Svaha and Svadha. You are Vashatkara and embodiment of Svara. You are nectar. O eternal and imperishable one, you are the embodiment of the threefold matra. You are half a matra, though eternal. You are verily that which cannot to uttered specifically. You are Savitri and the supreme mother of the devas. By you this universe is protected and at the end you always consume it. You are always of the form of whole world. At the hour of creation, you are of the form of creative force, at the time of sustentation you are the form of the protective power, and at the time of dissolution of the world you are of the form of destructive power. You are the supreme knowledge and also the great conscience, the great intellect and contemplation as also the great delusion. Great Devi, you are also the great Asuri.

By you this universe is born, you are the cause of this world created and you are the primordial cause of everything, bringing into force the three qualities. You are the dark night of periodic dissolution and great night of final dissolution and the terrible night of delusion. You are the goddess of good fortune, the ruler, modesty,

Eighteen Armed Devi Durga killing demons, Nurpur, Mid 18th Century
Himachal State Museum, Shimla

intelligence characterized by knowledge, bashfulness, nourishment, contentment, tranquility and forbearance. Armed with your weapons and attributes you are terrible, yet pleasing, in fact more pleasing than all the pleasing things and you are the beauty incarnate. You are the Supreme Ishvari, beyond any dimensions of high and low 71-81.

Whatever or wherever anything real or unreal that is seen in existence in any form has power all possessed by this Yoganidra because she is the soul of everything, how can I extrol You? I don't know. By you alone, even he who creates, sustains and devours the world, is put to sleep. No one can, in fact, have capability of extolling

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you. We are all 'limited' in your praise. You have created Vishnu, Shiva and I the Brahma and we take our embodied forms from you. No one is capable of extolling you. Devi, being lauded thus bewitch these two unassailable asuras Madhu and Kaitabha with your superior powers. Let Vishnu, the Master of the world, be

Sinhavahini Devi fighting Asuras, Devi Mahatamya, Kangra A.D. 1800
Himachal State Museum, Shimla

quickly awakened from sleep and rouse up his nature to slay these two great giants, the demons." 82-87

The Rishi told the two, 'there, the Devi of delusion extolled thus by Brahma, in order to awaken Vishnu for the destruction of Madhu and Kaitabha, drew himself out from his eyes, mouth, nostrils, arms, heart and breast and appeared in the sight of Brahma of inscrutable birth. Vishnu, Lord of the Universe, quitted her, rose up from His couch on the universal ocean and saw these two evil demons, Madhu and Kaitabha, of exceeding heroism and power, with eyes red in anger, endeavouring to devour Brahma. Thereupon the Supreme Lord Vishnu got up and fought with the giants for five thousand years, using his own arms as weapons. And they frenzied with their exceeding power, and deluded by Mahamaya asked Vishnu to request for a boon from them. 88-95

The Lord replied back, "If you both are pleased with me, you must both be slain by me now. I need no other boon excepting your existence to end.

The Asuras were bewitched by Mahamaya, looked at the Pralaya, deluge below and spoke to Vishnu, 'slay us at the spot where earth is not flooded by water.' The Lord said, 'yes', and took them on His loins and severed their heads with his discus. Thus Mahamaya praised by Brahma appeared in person. And now follows the glory of this Devi as told by the Rishi.

The Rishi said, 'Second Charita of Devi mahatmaya opens with Meditation of Devi Mahalakshmi who is resorted to with concentration. The Devi is seated on the lotus and is remembered as destroyer of Mahishasura.

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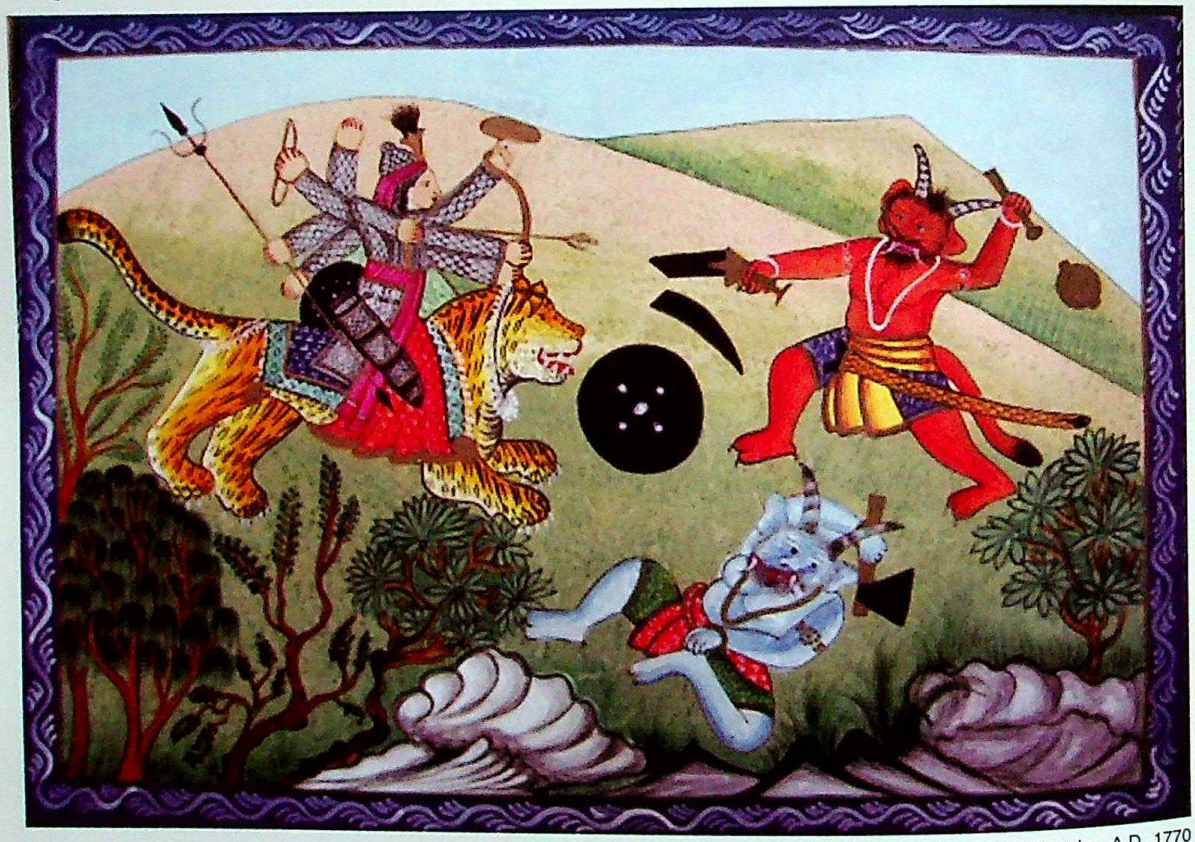
She is in placid mood (Sudarshana) and has the complexion of coral and in her eighteen hands she holds different attributes, viz. rosary, axe, mace, arrow, thunderbolt (Bajra), lotus, bow, pitcher, rod, Shakti, sword, shield, conch, bell, wine-cup, trident, noose (Pasha) and the discus."

The Rishi speaks of ancient times when Mahishasura, the Giant demon was the Lord of Asuras and Indra was the Lords of all the divinities. A fierce war was fought between the devas and asuras for one hundred years in which the army of the devas was vanquished by the valorous asuras which led to Mahishasura becoming the Lord of Indra's heaven. The dethroned and exiled divinities headed by Brahma, the Lord of all beings called on Shiva and Vishnu and gave them the detailed version of their war, and also the story of their defeat at the hands of Mahishasura. 1-5

The Mahishasura himself had assumed the jurisdiction and control of the Lord Sun, Indra, Agni (fire), Vayu (Air), Chandra (the Moon), Yama (the Lord of death) and Varuna (the lord of water) resulting in all these devas being thrown out from heaven by the evil natured demon. All divines lived on earth like all the mortals. The



A Demon approaches Sinhavahini Devi, Chamba, A.D. 1770
Bhuri Singh Museum, Chamba

divines needed help and shelter from both the Lords so approached and requested the all powerful Shiva and Vishnu to think out ways and means for the destruction of the demon lord. Having seen the plight and misery of the devas, the two Lords were annoyed with the demons and in anger they looked fierce with frowns on their faces. 6-8

The anger of the two Lords resulted in the divine light (Tejapunja) appearing brightly which got united with Tejapunja of Brahma and various other divinities giving shape to a concentration of light like a mountain in excessive blaze, pervading all the universe with flames and lustre this, unique 'Tejapunja' combined in one appeared in a female form. 9-13

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The female form was shaped by that which was Shiva's light, her face came into being, by Yama's, her hair by Vishnu's her arms, by Lord Moon's light, her breasts. Indra's light formed her waist whereas Varuna's light changed into her hips. Brahma's light gave her feet, Lord Sun's light shaped her toes, the eight Vasus as Tejapunja

The Devi's lion kills demons, Chamba, Pahari, A.D. 1760-1770
Bhuri Singh Museum, Chamba

formed fingers of her hands whereas Kubera's light changed into her nose, by Prajapati's light became her teeth and the light contributed by Agni formed her trinetra, the three eyes. The light of the two Sandhyas gave her eyebrows, Vayu gave her ears and in the process the light from all other divines contributed to the being of the auspicious Devi, the great goddess. 14-18

The form was seen by the divines who were oppressed by Mahishasura. The Devi born of 'Tejapunja' was a sight of rare experience of joy to the immortals. Lord Shiva drawing forth a trident from his own trident presented it to the Devi whereas Vishnu brought forth a discus out of his own discus and presented it to the Devi. Varuna gave her a conch, Agni a spear, Maruta a bow and two quivers full of arrows. Lord Indra brought forth a thunderbolt, the Bajra from his own Bajra and adding a bell taken from his divine elephant Airavata, enriched the Devi with his weapons. Yama gave her a staff (rod) from his Kaladanda (staff of death) and Varuna a noose. Brahma provided her with a string of beads and Kamandala (water pot). The Sun bestowed his own rays on all the pores of her skin and Kala (time) gave her a glittering sword.

Pure necklace, a pair of eternal garments, a divine crest-jewel, a pair of earrings, bracelets, crescent moon, armlets on all her arms, a pair of brilliant anklets, a unique Hansuli (Haara, a large necklace) and beautiful rare rings in all her fingers were provided by Kshir Sagar (the ocean of milk). Vishvakarma presented her with a shining axe along with weapons of various shapes and forms and also an impenetrable armour. Garlands of unfading lotus-flowers were given by the great sea to adorn her head and breasts and a unique full bloom lotus

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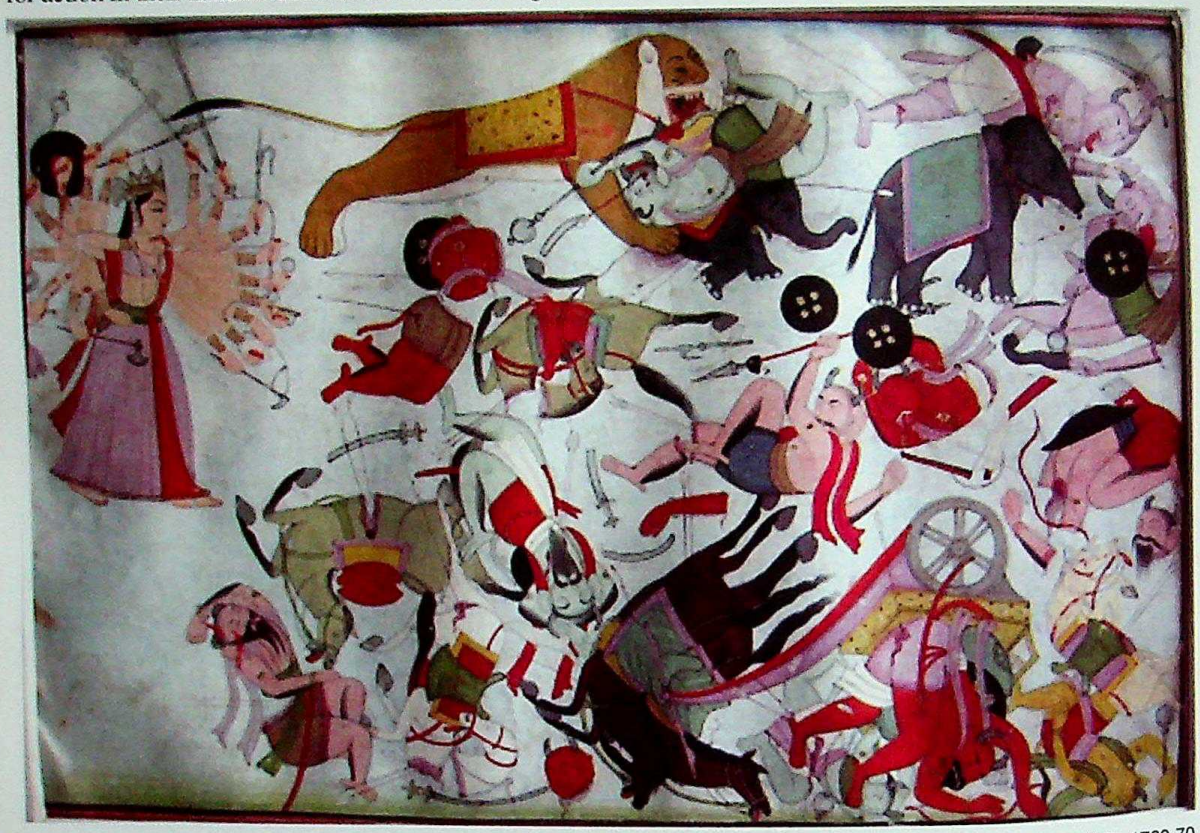
for her to hold in her hand. The great Himalaya, the Himavata gave her various jewels to wear and a lion to ride.

The Lord of wealth Kubera gave her the immortal cup of wine full for ever. Sheshnaga gave her all the serpants on earth. Other divines honoured her with ornaments and weapons of utility. Thus divined to life the Devi roared aloud with a defying laugh again and again, unendingly this terrible roar yielded Rava (sound) unique which filled the entire sky and caused great reverberation. All the three worlds quivered in quake and the great seas trembled. 19-33

The earth quaked and all the mountains rocked. The Devas exclaimed in joy in the glory of the lion-riding Devi and praised the Devi. The Sages bowed their bodies in devotion and extolled the goddess. Seeing the three worlds agitated the foes of the devas, mobilized all their forces and rose up together with weapons raised for action in their hands. Mahishasura in furious anger shouted 'A! what is happening here? He with innumerable



The Devi Ishwari in her eighteen arms with her Lion fighting demons, Chamba, A.D. 1760-70
Bhuri Singh Museum, Chamba

asuras ran fast towards the source of the echo and saw the Devi pervading the three worlds with her lustre. Her footsteps made the earth bend, craping the sky with her diadem, quivering the nether world with the twang of her bow string and there she stood pervading all the quarters around with her thousand arms. It followed a battle between that Devi and the foes of the devas, in which the sky was filled with the light of the illuminated weapons and arms hurled diversely. Mahishasura's great General Chikasura fought against the Devi in the war followed by Chamara demon leading cavalry, charioteers, elephant troops and the foot soldiers. A great demon warrior Udagra jumped into battle with sixty thousand chariots. The giant Mahahanu with ten million led the army of demons in fighting the great battle. Asiloma a great among asuras had 15 million chariots and Bashkala with sixty million jumped into the fight against the Devi. Parivarita asuras with a billion soldiers on elephants and horses and chariots fought in that battle. An asura named Bidala fought leading an army of five hundred crores of chariots. In addition to the mentioned and named demons thousands of other demons joined the demon

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forces on chariots, elephants and horseback supported by crores and billions of fighters. Mahishasura himself made his presence on the battlefield and inspired the countless demons who fought in the battle against the Devi, with swords, axes, and halberds. Others, a few hurdled spears and nooses.

Devi Jagatdhatri Ambika kills demons, Chamba, A.D. 1760-70
Bhuri Singh Museum, Chamba

The asuras attacked the Devi with swords and their skilled weaponry but the Devi showering her weapons and arms in her cosmic Devi Chandika form and easily cut into pieces all those weapons and arms without any strain visible. The gods and sages extolled her, while she the Devi Ishwari threw upon the bodies of the asuras with her weapons and arms. The lion which seated the Devi, shaking its mane in rage stalked among the hosts of asuras like a conflagration amidst the forests. The breath and sighs heaved by Ambika, the Devi during battles gave birth to the battalions by hundreds and thousands and having been energized by the cosmic power of the Devi, these battalions of divine soldiers fought with axes, javelins, swords, halberds, and destroyed the asuras. In the great material festivals the forces supporting the Devi beat drums, blew conches and played on tabors. Devi used her trident to kill hundred of asuras, her club, showers of spears, swords and other weaponry threw down the millions in stupefied state caused by the noise of her bell binding others with her noose, she dragged them on the ground and some asuras were split into two by the sharp slashes of her sword and the others, smashed by the blows of her mace, lay down on the ground, and some severely harmed by her club vomitted forth blood. 34-59.

Pierced by her trident in the breasts, some asuras fell dead on the ground and others succumbed to the wounds inflicted by the Devi's arrows they resembled porcupines. Some lost their arms as they were cut off and others had their necks broken, some others rolled down while a few were torn asunder in the middle of their trunks while quite a lot of asuras fell on the ground with their legs severed. Some rendered one armed, one eyed and one legged were again clove in twain by the Devi. Some rendered headless, fell and rose again. Headless

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Mahishasuramardini, Guler, A.D. 1790-96, Bharat Kala Bhavan, Varanasi

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Mahishasuramardini, Guler, A.D. 1790-96, Bharat Kala Bhavan, Varanasi

Devi Chandika, Guler, A.D. 1790-95, Bharat Kala Bhavan, Varanasi

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Mahishasuramardini, Guler, 1780-85 Bharat Kala Bhavan, Varanasi

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The Devi Fighting Demons, Devi Mahatamya, Guler, A.D. 1780-85
Bharat Kala Bhavan, Varanasi

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trunks of asuras with best weapons held in their hands fought the Devi and a few of them danced in the battlefield to the rhythm of the musical instruments. Some cut to half dead held their weapons and cried 'stop, stop.' The ground became impossible with the dead and fallen asuras, elephants, horses and the chariots. Large rivers filled with profuse blood from the asuras appeared in flow on the ground instantaneously. Ambika, the great Devi destroyed the vast army of the asuras in a manner where fire consumed huge heaps of straw and wood.

Lion, the carrier vehicle of the Devi, thundering aloud with shaking and quivering mane, prowled about in the battle field, appearing to search out the vital breaths from the bodies of the asuras. Seeing Devi and her forces fighting in great exaltation and destroying the asura army, the divines in heaven showered flowers and faithfully extolled the Devi. 60-69.

End of second chapter : 'Slaughter of the armies of Mahishasura; Devi Mahatamya, Markandeya Purana.'

Devi Ambika attacking Mahishasura, Devi Mahatamya, Markandeya Purana, Guler, A.D. 1780-85

The Rishi said that seeing the asura army being slain, the great asura general Chiksura advanced in anger to fight Ambika. He rained showers of arrows on the Devi in the battle clouding the sky but the Devi easily cut asunder the masses of his arrows, killed his horses and men and split his bow and lofty banner. Arrows piersed the asura but he rushed to kill the Devi with his sword. He smote the lion on its head and struck the Devi on her left arm with his sharp-edged sword but his sword broke into pieces which filled the asura with red-rage in his eyes. He in anger gasped and flung at Bhadrakali, the Chandika. His pike blazed with lustre appeared like the Sun appearing to provide it glaze. The Devi hurled her pike that shattered the pike of the asura and brought the pike

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and asura both to fragments in a split second. Seeing the asura warrior dead, Chamra, the other general and afflictor of Davas, mounted an elephant, advanced while hurling his spear at the Devi. Ambika, assailed it with a whoop and snatched it off its lustre, made it fall on the ground which engraged Chamara who flung a pike which met to split in Devi's arrow's. Devi's lion suddenly leaped up and attacked the elephant's forehead which made the Asura to fight the Devi on the ground where the impetuous fight continued. The lion inspired with vigour suddenly skyjumped and descending on Chamara's head, gave blows with his paw resulting in severed head of the demon. 1-16.

The asura general Udagra was killed by the Devi with unconventional weapons; stones, trees etc., whereas

The Devi Ambika Vanquishes Mahishasura, Devi Mahatamya, Chamba, A.D. 1760-70
Bhuri Singh Museum, Chamba

the Asura Kayala was struck down by the Devi with the handle of her ivory sword. Devi minced to powder Asura chief Uddhata with the blows of her club and Baskala with a dart. Tamra and Andhaka were killed with Devi's arrows which followed the use of her trident to emancipate the earth of Asura Ugrasya, Ugravirya and Mahahanu. Bidal's head was struck down his body with Devi's sword, whereas her arrows despatched Durdhara and Durmukha to the abode of death. At this juncture Mahishasura terrified the troops of Devi with his own buffalo form killing a few with a blow of his muzzle, some by stamping with his hooves, some by the lashes of his tail, and others by the pokes of his horns. His impetuous speed hit some to death and his bellowing and wheeling movement and blast of his breath killed many. Devi's army was stopped by his attacks. Mahishasura rushed to slay the lion of the Mahadevi which enraged Ambika. Mahishasura bellowed terribly; he the great in valour, pounded the surface of the earth with his hooves in rage, tossed up the high mountains with his horns, his velocity of wheeling caused damage and disintegration to the earth crushed under his weight and the seas overflowed with the touch and lashing of his tail. He pierced the clouds to fragments with his swaying horns. His breath caused blasts in mountains which fell down as splinters from the air. This was the moment now for the Devi to display her wrath; she saw the great demon, the giant advancing towards her in attack born of his rage

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and body enlarged and swollen in size beyond imagination. She flung her noose and bound him with it. The asura quitting his buffalo form changed into a lion but the Devi cut the lion head of the asura who took to human form and appeared to fight the Devi with his sword. Devi's arms chopped the human head of the demon who switched his shape to that of an elephant who trugged at Devi's lion with his trunk with a loud roar and dragged the lion. The Devi cut his trunk with her sword and the Asura chose to come in buffalo shape again which shook the three worlds and everything inhabiting them.

Devi was enraged as Chandika; she the mother of all the worlds quaffed a divine drink again and again, with eyes red, she laughed. On the other hand the asura roared intoxicated with his strength and valour, and hurled up routed mountains with his horns on Chandika, the great mother. 17-36

Devi halted to drink her divine wine and challenged the fool of a demon to roar as much as he liked

Devi Chandika Killing Nishumbha, Chamba, A.D. 1760-70
Bhuri Singh Museum, Chamba

because, she told him that his end was near to give devas time to roar on his death. She jumped and landed herself on that great asura, pressed him on the neck with her foot and struck him with her spear at which Mahishasura from his own mouth started appearing in another changed form. Only half of his new form was born when the Devi fought the half-revealed asura and she struck off his head with her great sword.

The death of Mahishasura caused a cry in consternation which made the whole asura army perish which gave happiness to the hosts of devas who with great sages of heaven praised the Devi. Gandharava lord sang and the bevies of apsaras danced.

End of 3rd chapter, 'The slaying of Mahishasura of Devi Mahatamya in Markandeya Purara.'

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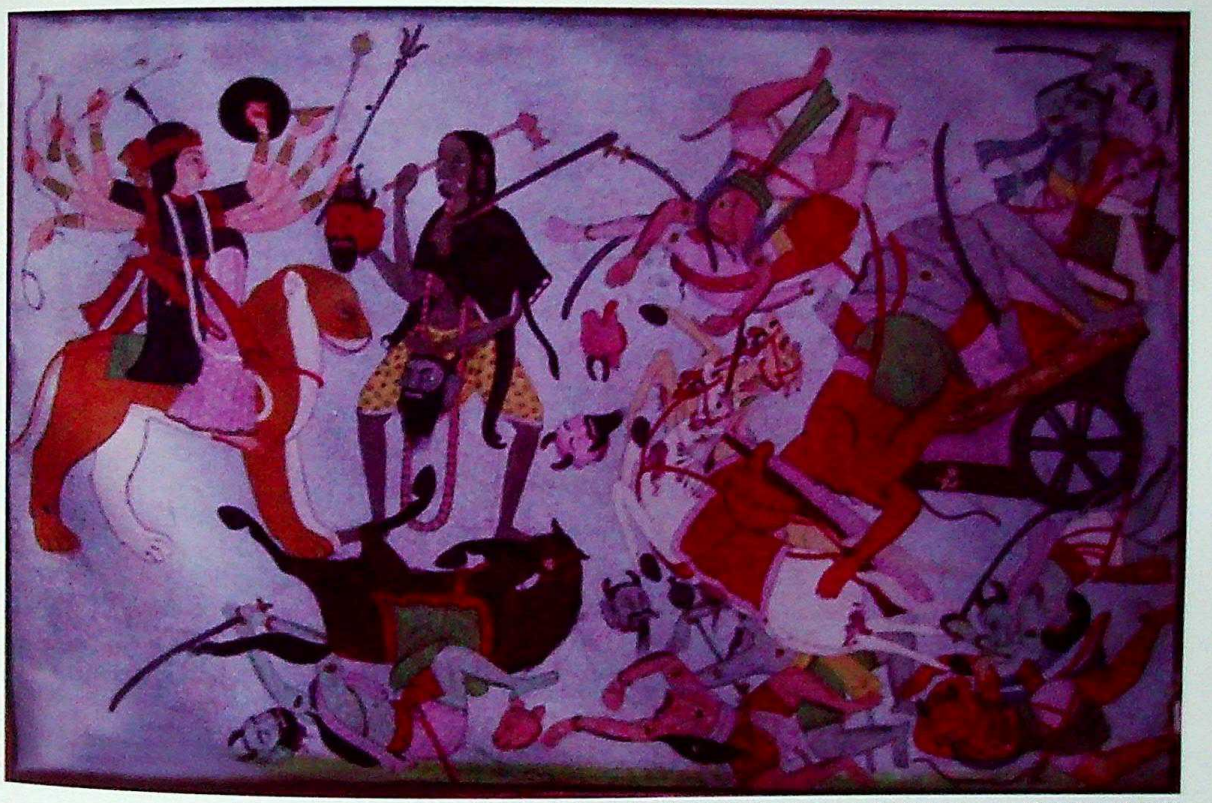
The Rishi said, "the most valiant but evil natured Mahishasura and his army's extinction at the hands of the Devi rendered the hosts of devas and lord Indra happiness and in revernce for the goddess, they bowed to her in words of praise. In the hour of victory their devotional reverence to devi added bliss to their handsome faces and made them beautiful with horripilation and exultation." They said, "to that Ambika who is worthy of worship by all divines and sages and pervades this world by her power and who is the embodiment of the entire powers of all the hosts of devas, we bow in devotion. May she grant us auspicions gifts! May Chandika, whose incomparable greatness and power Lords Vishnu, Brahma and Hara (Shiva) are unable to describe, bestow her mind on protecting the entire world and on destorying the fear of evil. Devi. You are yourself good fortune in the dwellings of the virtuous, and ill-fortune in those of the vicious, intelligence in the hearts of the learned, faith in the hearts of the good and modesty in the hearts of the high-born. May you protect the Universe! We are not



Devi Bhagvati with Kali fighting demons, Devi Mahatamya, Chamba, 1660-70
Bhuri Singh Museum, Chamba

competent in describing the inconceivable form of you, O Devi, or your abundant surpassing valour that destroys the asuras, or your wonderful feats displayed in battles among all the hosts of gods, asuras and all others! You are the origin of all the worlds! Though you are possessed of Trigunas (Sattva, Rajas and Tamas of which the world is made) you are not known to have any of their attendant faults. You are incomprehensible even to lord Vishnu, Shiva and others! You are the resort of all! This entire universe is composed of an infinitesmal portion of yourself! You are verily the supreme primordial. Prakriti (Creatrix) untransformed. Devi is Svaha (the highest form pure in speech) at whose ulterance the assemblage of all the gods attains satisfaction in all the sacrifices. You are the Svadha which gives staisfaction to manes (Pitras). By these reasons you are chanted by people. O! Devi, you are Bhagavati, the supreme knowledge, which is the cause of liberation and great inconceivale penances. You as supreme knowledge are cultivated by sages looking for emancipation, whose senses are well restrained, who are devoted to reality, and have shed all the blemishes. You are the soul of Shabda Brahman. You are the repository of the very pure Rika and Yajura hymns and Sama's, the recital of whose words is beautiful with the Udgitha. (Rig-veda, Yajur-veda, and Sama-veda are respectively forms of Mahakali, Mahalakshmi and Maha-

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The Devi being worshipped by the Devas after she Vanquishes demons Lord
Devi Mahatamya, Markandeya Purana, Guler, A.D. 1760

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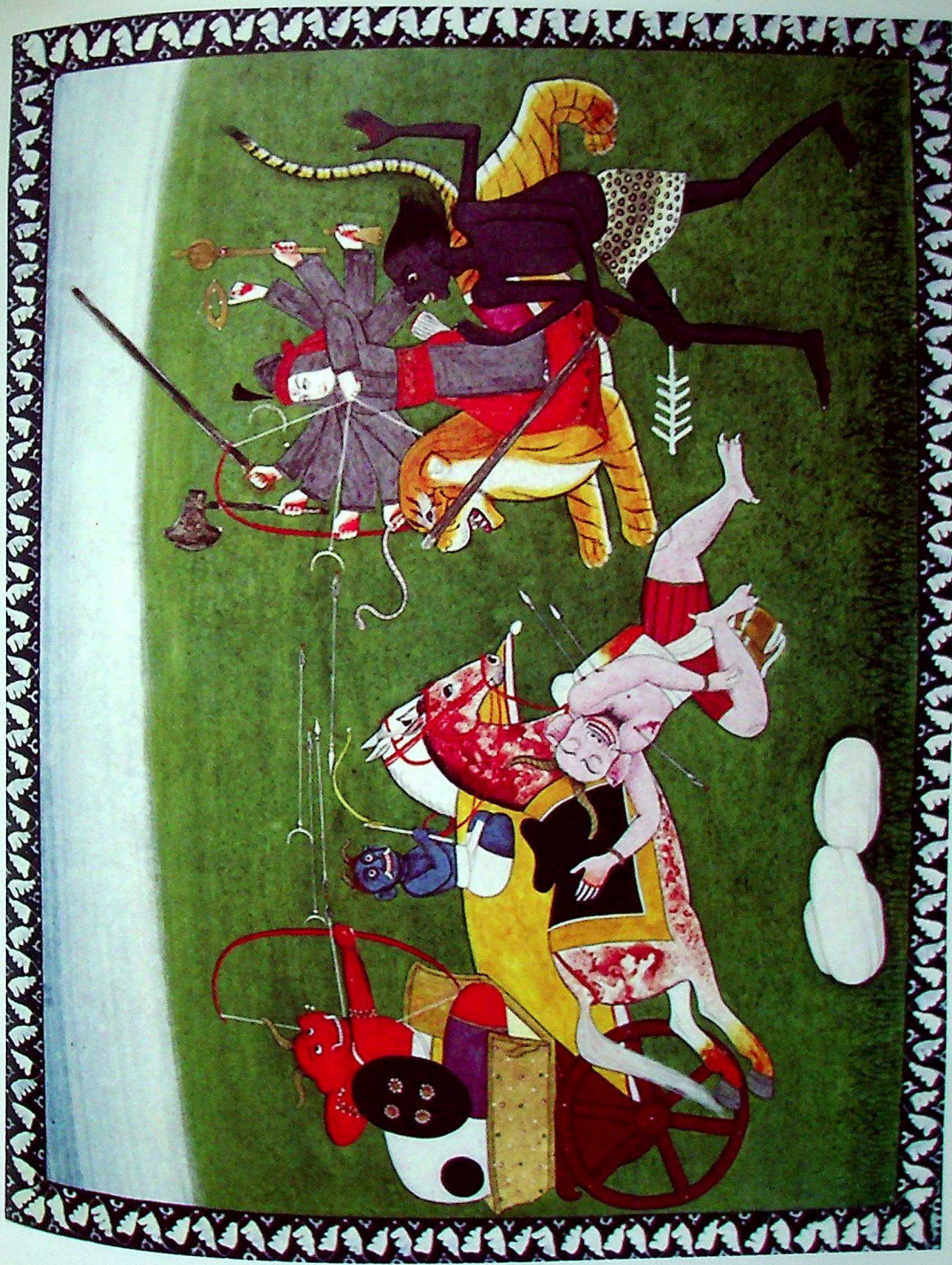

The Devi and Kali Fight Demon Raktabija Devi Mahatamya, Guler, A.D. 1780-85, Bharat Kala Bhavan, Varanasi

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The Devas in worship of sixteen-armed Devi Jagatgauri, Kangra, *Mid 18th Century*
Himachal State Museum, Shimla

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The Devi Chaumunda being presented with the head of a Demon by Devi Kali, Guler, A.D. 1780-85 , Bharat Kala Bhavan, Varanasi

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Sarswati and the only Pranava or Onkar can sing these Vedas). You are Bhagvati embodying the three Vedas and you are also the sustenance whereby life is maintained. You are the supreme destroyer of the pain of all the worlds." 1-10

"O Devi, you are the intellect, by which the essence of all scriptures is comprehended. You are Durga, the boat that takes men across the difficult ocean of worldly existence, devoid of attachments. You are Sri Lakshmi who has invariably taken her abode in the heart of lord Vishnu. You are Gauri who has become a part of Shiva. You, our goddes, gently smiling, pure, resembling the full moon's orb, beautiful like the splendour of excellent gold was your face! Yet it was strange that, being swayed by anger, Mahishasura suddenly struck your face when he saw it. On seeing your face Mahishasura should have known his end and left the world because seeing you as enraged destroyer, no one could have survived. O Devi, be propitious. You are supreme, your anger

Demon Sugriva approaches the Devi Gauri with a message from Shumbha and Nishumbha, Chamba, A.D. 1760-70
Bhuri Singh Museum, Chamba

destroys asuras for the good of the world. This was established when countless forces of Mahishasura were killed. You are always bounteous, with whom you are well pleased, those fortunate ones are indeed the object of esteem in the world, their riches, glories and acts of righteousness perish not ; they are indeed blessed and possessed of devoted children, servants and wives. By your grace, O Devi, the blessed humans do daily all righteous deeds with utmost care and thereby attain heaven. Are you not, therefore, O Devi, the bestower of reward in all the three worlds? When called to mind in trouble, you remove fear for every creature. When called to mind by those in happiness, you bestow a mind still further pious and purified. You are the only Devi who dispells poverty, pain and fear and ever sympathtic heart of yours helps one and all. 11.17

Killing of asuras who have committed sins is a matter of joy for the worldly beings. Devi fights them for giving them riddance from life of hell and ultimately allowing heaven even to the sinners. Devi's weapons and missiles when touch the body of the asuras purifies them to attain higher worlds. Intention of Devi is never

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inimical. Terrible flashes of light issued from Devi's sword do not blind asuras because the Devi wishes them to see her moon face giving out cool rays. She does so to subdue the wicked. Devi's peerless beauty is inconceivable for others; she destroys those who have robbed the devas of their prowess showing manifested compassion

The Emergence of Kali from mother Goddess, Devi Mahatamya, Markandeya Purana, Guler, Kangra Pahari, 18th Century
Government Museum and Art Gallery, Chandigarh

even towards the enemies. Devi's unmatched prowess, compassion in her and relentlessness in battle strike fear in enemies, but the Devi is bestower of booms in all the three worlds and saviour of the universe through destruction of evil ones. Killing enemy on the battle front is the only way to give heaven to the enemy even, the frenzied enemy of good is destroyed by you to dispel our fear as Ambika.

We pray to the Devi to protect us with her spear, sword, sound of her bell and the twang of her bow-string. She guards us everywhere as Ishwari. Her lovely forms protect us on earth. Devi is for our protection, continuity. 18-27

Devi as supporter of the worlds is praised by the devas and worshipped with celestial flowers that blossomed in the Nandana, the flower garden of heaven. She is offered scents and perfumes, Kumkuma, Aguru, Kasturi, Chandana and Karpura and other unguents in devotion. After killing the enemy of devas, she seen as benignly serene in countenance, spoke to devas," Have from me whatever chosen desires as boons you can ask for. Gratified immensely with your hymns I grant it with great pleasure."

Devas were satisfied with the killing of Mahishasura but asked the Devi Mahaswari to destroy their direct enemies whenever the clamity came and they thought of Devi in their minds. Not only this they also asked the Devi, who has spotless countenance, to protect all mortals the who sing her in hymns and be gracious to the worldly ones for increase in their wealth, family, prosperity and life. She is Ambika in this action.

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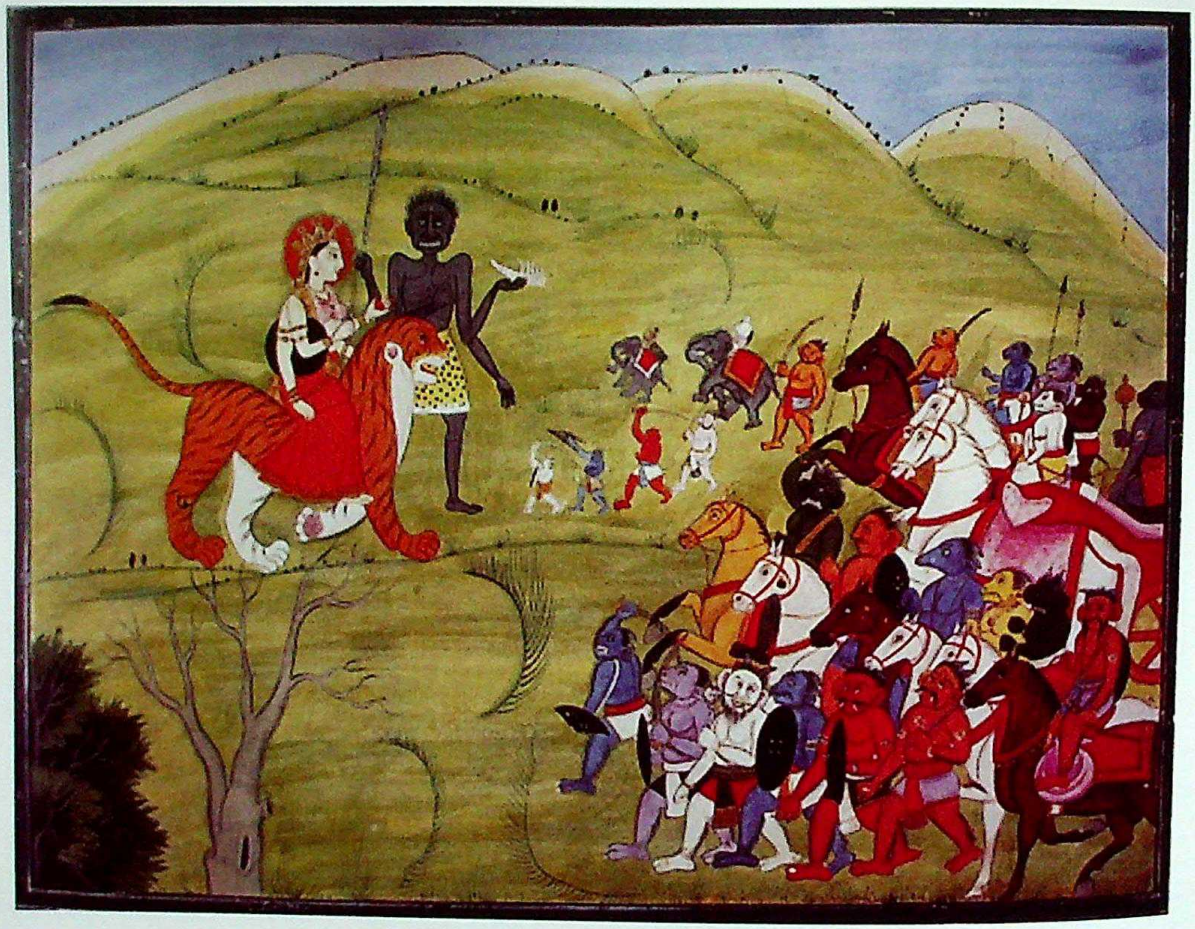
Devi as Bhadrakali, thus being propitiated by the devas for the sake of the world and the world of the devas, said,"Be it so," and vanished from their sight. She is our god in weal and woe.

The Rishi narrated the above detailed fact to the king Suratha and the trader Samadhi adding, this is how the Devi who desires the good of all the three worlds made her appearance of yore out of the bodies of devas and again how, as a benefactress of the devas she appeared in the form of Gauri for the slaying of wicked asuras as well as Shumbha and Nishumbha, and for the protection of three worlds. Listen as I relate it and tell it to you as it happened. 28-42

End of Chapter IV, 'Paraises by Shakra and others, Devi Mahatamya, in Markandeya Purana.'



Devi Durga and Mahakali facing demonic army, Devi Mahatamya, Markandeya Purana, Kangra, A.D. 1800, National Museum, New Delhi

Meditation of Mahasarswati

I meditate on the incomparable Mahasarwati who holds in her lotus-like (eight) hands bell, trident, plough, conch, mace, discus, bow and arrow; who is effulgent like the moon shining at the fringe of a cloud, who is the destroyer of Shumbha and other asuras, who issued forth from Parvati's body is the substratum of the three worlds.

The Rishi continued the story of asuras stating that long back when lord Indra ruled the three worlds, the asuras deprived him of his superme sacrifices in Yajna by force of their pride and strength. Asuras Shumbba and

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Nishumbha, themselves in addition to their domain subordinated the Sun, Moon, Kubara, Yama and Varuna by taking over their regimes and offices and exercised themselves with the authority of Vayu (air) and duty of Agni (fire). Deprived, subordinated and defeated devas having been expelled from their functional Kingdoms thought of the invincible Devi who had granted them the boon that in calamities when revoked or remembered, she will appear again. The devas resolving thus went to Himavat, the lord of mountains and there extolled the Devi, who is the illusive power of Vishnu. They paid their homage to the Mahadevi, the ever auspicious. They bowed to her in salutation each time they recalled her prowess.' She who is the primordial cause and the sustaining

Devi Jagatgauri being welcomed by the Gods, Chamba, A.D. 1760-70
Bhuri Singh Museum, Chamba

power,' the devas made obeisance to her. 1-10

The devas uttered their prayer by adding 'नमस्तस्यै, नमस्तस्यै, नमस्तस्यै नमो नमः' (Namastasyaiyi, Namastasyaiyi, Namastasyaiyi, namoh namah) to every part of their utterance of the praise of Devi in her any form, may it be the terrible who is eternal or Gauri who is the supporter of the universe or the one who is of the from of moon and moon-light and happiness itself. She is welfare, prosperity and success. As Shiva's Consort, the devi herself is good fortune as well as misfortune. She is Nairiti (Lakshmi of asuras) Lakshmi of Kings, she is Sharvani, the creator of the world. As Durga she takes us across the sea of troubles, she is the essence of of all the truth, author of each action and all favours. The Devi is knowledge of discernment of all in atoms, as Krishna and Dhumavati she pervades the universe.

We salute in prostrate posture the one who is at once most gentle and most terrible. She is the one as Vishnumaya who ignites the soul as consciousness of all creatures and is of the form of volition, intellignece of all beings. She abides in us as sleep, hunger, reflection, form of power, thirst, forgiveness, genus, modesty, peace, faith, loveliness, good fortune, memory, compassion, contentment. We pay all ceremonial respects and bow to the Devi who lives in form of mother, and controls the truth in obverse and reverse forms and is all pervading, who constantly presides over the senses of all beings and governs all the elements; who abides in form of

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consciousness. In each word said in her praise we salute her again and again. 11-80

The devas invoked her for the cause of their desired object in the past and adorned by the lord of devas every day, may she the Ishveri, the source of all good, accomplish for them all auspicious and bring an end to their misfortunes and calamities. The devas now, again invoked her, the revered one, because, they were tormented again by arrogant asuras. The devi is the only one called to mind by them in obeisant with devotion for destroying instantly all their calamities. 81-82

Describing the Devi in form as seen by devas the Rishi told king Suratha that while the devas were thus engaged in praises and acts of adoration of the Devi, Shiva's Consort Parvati came at that moment to bathe in the sacred water of the river Ganga. She, the one with fortune written on her lovely forehead said to the devas

Devis Kali and Parvati with gods Indra and Varuna, Devi Mahatamya, Chamba, A.D. 1660-70
Bhuri Singh Museum, Chamba

"who is praised in adoration by you here?" The auspicious goddess, sprung forth from her physical existence herself gave the reply: "This hymn is addressed to me by the assembled devas tortured and deprived and defeated in battle by the asuras Shumbha and Nishumbha. 83-86

The sage told the king that Ambika came out of the physical shape, from the Kosha (Sheath) of Parvati is glorified as Kaushiki in all the three worlds. After Kaushiki came in form, the body of goddess Parvati changed into dark complexion and as such she was called Kalika stationed herself on Himalayas. 87-88

Ambika, now in Kaushiki form appeared in charming and most attractive form and as devi drew the attention of Chanda and Munda, the two servants of giants Shumbha and Nishumbha who reported to their lords about the woman, most surpassingly beautiful dwelling among shaded lustre on mount Himalaya. They spoke about Devi's supreme beauty never seen before anywhere and told the giants to ascertain her credentials and take

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possession of her. The servants persuaded their lord to have a look at her, who was indeed a gem among women, of exquisitely beautiful body limbs, illuminating the quarters with her lustre. They praised their bosses by telling them that what ever existed as jewels, precious stones, elephants, horses and other material wealth of the three worlds was already with them. Also the divine elephant Ariavata of Indra, the sacred Parijata tree and the horse Uccaihshrava (the wealth of divines form churning of sea) were already theirs. Brahma's chariot yoked with swans is parked now in the courtyard of powerful giants. Mahapadma, one of the nine treasures of Kubera, the divine garland named Kinjalkni made of undecaying lotus flowers and gold showering umbrella of lord

The Devas praying before Goddess Kamla, Devi Mahatamya, Chamba, A.D. 1760-1770
Bhuri Singh Museum, Chamba

Varuna alongwith Prajapati's grand chariot was already with the giants of danava clan, the twosome Shumbha and Nishmbha. Not only that but lord Yama's (deaths) weapon of power named Utkrantida and the noose of the ocean king also was with Nishumbha along with every kind of gems obtained from the great oceans. Their possessions in Nishumbha's custody included two garments which were purified by the fire and now with all this obtained the giants should bring the beautiful lady-jewel in booty and capture.

Hearing the ballad in praise Shumbha ordered the great Asura Sugriva to go as messenger to the woman as described and give her his message in such words of his that she quickly came to him in love. Sugriva reached

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the hill peak of the Devi and spoke to her in fine and sweet words. The messenger said "O Devi Shumbha, lord of asuras, is the supreme lord sovereign of three worlds. He has sent me with his words for you and because he is the one who has vanquished all the foes of asuras, he commands the three worlds, lords over all devas and has all precious possessions the three worlds have produced. The prosessions of devas from Kashirsagar churning are now with him because he has humbled the gods to pay homage to him. All gandharvas and nagas were under his control. He wants you Devi to live with him as co-enjoyer of the best objects.

The messenger told the Devi to be either his or his brother Nishumbha's woman because, "you as the woman with eyes enough to steal hearts (Chanchala-panga) are a jewel in fact. You can own wealth great and beyond compare if you marry Shumbha and be his wife. Just give a thought to his words." 87-114

The Devas worshiping the Devi, Guler, A.D. 1780-85
Bharat Kala Bhavan, Varanasi

Thus told, the Rishi said, Durga, the adorable and auspicious, by whom this universe is supported came in serious and serene face and spoke to the messenger stating that the messenger was right in whatever he had said about Shumbha the sovereign of three worlds and his brother Nishumbha and added, "But in this matter, how can that which has been promised be made false? Hear what promise in vow I have made in foolishness : he who conquests me in battle removes my pride and is my match in strength in the world shall be my husband. Let Shumbha come here then or Nishumbha the great asura to fight me, vanquish me here and take me soon in marriage without any further delay.

The messenger found the Devi haughty and asked her to desist from such a challenge because no man in three worlds can ever defeat Shumbha and Nishumbha. The devas combined would not face him, what to say

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of a woman like the Devi, who as a single person is no force. Indra and all other powerful divinities have failed and the messenger requested the Devi to submit and walk down to Shumbha and Nishumbha with dignity otherwise she would face degradation if pulled by her hair in forced manner because there existed no option for her.

On hearing the messenger saying strong words the Devi said "yes, it is. Shumbha is strong and so is his

Devi Durga, Jammu, A.D. 1810-25
Dogra Art, Gallery, Jammu

brother Nishumbha exceedingly heroic! But I am helpless since there stands ill considered vow taken by me long ago. You messenger go back and tell the lord asuras carefully all this that I have said, let them do whatever the consider appropriate."

End of Chapter V, 'Devi's conversation with the messenger, Devi Mahatamya in Markandeya-Purana'

The Rishi continued his narration telling the king that the asura messenger on hearing the words of the Devi was filled with indignation and returned to his masters and related in detail the message from the Devi which enraged the monarch who told his chief of the army, Dhumralochna to take his asura army and fetch the Devi by force that shrew, distressed when dragged by her hair. Also if any of her saviours, a god, a yaksha or a gandharva tried to obstruct, let him be slain.

The sage said that Dhumralochna on orders from Shumbha went forth quickly accompanied by sixty thousand asuras. He saw the Devi stationed on lofty snowy mountain and asked her aloud to come to the presence of Shumbha and Nishumbha. He threatened her, "if you will not go to my lord with pleasure now, here I take you by force, distressed when dragged by your hair." 1–9.

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The Devi said : 'You are sent by the lord of the asuras, mighty yourself and with army at your command, "if you thus take me by force, then what can I do to you?" On hearing Devi's words the asura chief Dhumralochna rushed towards her and thereupon Ambika reduced him to ashes with a mere, heave of the sound from her breath in anger which followed asura army enraged attack on Ambika with showers of arrows, javelins and axes. At this stage Devi's lion, the sacred mount, shook its mane in anger and with a terrific roar fell on the asura army. Some asuras, the lion slaughtered with a blow of its fore paw, others with its mouth and many others by treading over with its hind legs. The lion with its claws, tore out the hearts of some and severed the heads of others with a blow of its paw. Others got their arms and hands severed and the lion with its mane shaking drank

Emergence of great Goddess during Chandi Mahayajna, Chamba, A.D. 1760-1770
Bhuri Singh Museum, Chamba

the blood from the hearts of many in the field. In a moment the Devi's mount, the lion destroyed the asura army in its mood of high spirits and exceedingly enraged attacking stances. 6-19.

On hearing Dhumralochna's extinction at the hands of the Devi, Shumbha was infuriated, his lips quivered and he commanded his two mighty asuras Chanda and Munda to go with large forces and force the lady to speedily come and if need be drag her by her hair or bind her. If there be any problem in doing so he could use the asura army to fight her with their weapons and by wounding the shrew and her lion stricken down, seize that Devi Ambika, bind and bring her quickly. 20-27.

End of Sixth Chapter 'The slaying of Dhaumralochana of Devi Mahatamya, Markandya of Purana.'

The Rishi said : The Asura lord now commanded Chanda and Munda to take asura army that immediately marched ahead in fourfold array. They found the Devi gently seated upon the lion on a huge golden peak of great mountain. On seeing her some of them in excitement made an effort to capture her while others approached

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her with their bows bent and swords drawn. Angered terribly Ambika in her countenance became dark as ink. Out from the surface of her forehead, fierce with frown, issued suddenly Kali (goddess) of terrible countenance, armed with sword decorated w h a garland of skulls, clad in a tiger skin, very appalling owing to her emaciated flesh, with gaping month fearful with her tongue lolling out, having deep-sunk reddish eyes and filling the regions of the sky with her roars, and falling upon impetuously and slaughtering the great asuras in that army, she devoured those hosts of the foes of the devas. 1 – 9.

Snatching the elephants with her one hand she flung the asuras into her mouth together with their assistants and drivers and their warrior riders and bells. She look the cavalry with their horses and chariot with charioteers,

Chaturbhuja Devi Durga with Devi Kali, Kangra, Mid 19th Century
Kangra Museum of Art, Dharamsala

she ground them most frighfully with her teeth. She seized one by his hair and another by the neck; one she crushed by the weight of her foot and another of her body. She caught the weapons with her mouth hurled on her and crunched them up with her teeth in great fury. With her sword she killed some and other beaten with her skull-topped staff where as many asuras she chewed with the edge of her teeth. On seeing all the hosts of asuras laid low in a moment Chanda rushed against Kali who was exceedingly dark and terrible. 10–16.

Chanda with very powerful showers of arrows and Munda with discuses hurled in thousands covered that fierce-eyed Devi who ate up all enemy weapons in her mouth in a split second, giving a sight of numorous solar orbs disappear into the midst of a cloud. Kali roared frightfully with her fearful teeth gleaming within her dreadful mouth, she laughed terribly in exceeding fury and mounting upon her great lion rushed at Chanda and seizing him by his hair, severed his head with her sword. Now Munda rushed at her. She felled him also to the ground, striking him with her sword in her fury and saw the fleeting panicky army of asuras. Kali, held the severed heads of Chanda and Munda before she approached Devi Chandika the mother goddess and said, her words mingled with very loud laughter. "Here I have brought you the heads of Chanda and Munda, as two great offerings in their sacrifice of battle; Shumbha and Nishumbha, you shall yourself slay."

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Rishi said, Thereupon seeing those two asura heads brought to her, the auspicious Chandika said to Kali these blessed words, "Because you have brought me both Chanda and Munda, you, O Devi, shall be famed in the world by the name Chamunda."

End of chapter VII 'the slaying of Chanda and Munda,' Devi Mahatamya, Markandeya Purana

Devi Sharveri, Devi Mahatamya, Kangra, Ms. illustration, A.D. 1890-1905
M.C. Uppal and S.C. Uppal Collection, Kangra

The Rishi said, 'The death of Chanda and Munda and their braves, Shumbha felt to his heart in great sorrow and with mind overcome by anger, commanded the mobilisation of all the demon forces (daitya) led by eighty six asuras – upraising their weapons with all their forces and the eighty-four Kambus (Tribes) surrounded by their own warriors to go out. Also he ordered the fifty tribes of Kotivirya asuras and hundred groups of Dhaumras tribes in addition to asuras Kalakas, Daurhrds, the Mauryas and the Kalakeyas hasten at his command and march forth ready for war. 1–6.

Shumba, the lord of the asuras, ferocious by nature, went forth attended by many thousands of soldiers and army to fight the Devi. Seeing the most compact and terrifying army coming towards her, Chandika, the Devi created great sound with the twang of her bow-string which filled the space between earth and the sky. Her lion roared aloud and this roar was extended with deafening roar of the clanging of her bell. Kali, expanding her mouth wide and filling the universe with sound in 'hum' overwhelmed the noises of her bowstring, lion and bell by her terrific roars. This environ enraged the asura batteries and his forces surrounded the lion, the Devi Chandika and accomplice Kali on all the four sides. At this hour, in order to annihilate the asuras and for protecting the supreme devas, there issued forth endowed with unforeseen vigour and power, Shaktis (the embodied forms of the power of the respective devas) from the bodies of Brahma, Shiva, Guha, Kartikaya, Vishnu, Indra and other gods with their forms and they went to Chandika to strengthen her and these Shaktis whatever was form of each god, and whatever the adornment and vehicles, in that very form advanced to fight with the asuras.

Brahma's Shakti came in his heavenly chariot drawn by swans, carrying a rosary and Kamandlu as Brahmani.

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Maheshvari arrived seated on a bull, holding a fine trident, wearing bracelets of great snakes, and adorned with a digit of the moon.

Ambika, in form of Guharupini, holding a spear in hand riding on a fine peacock, went in advance to attack the asuras. Shakti of Lord Vishnu came seated upon Graruda, holding conch, club, bow and sword in her hand.

Shakti of Hari assumed the incomparable form of a sacrificial boar also advanced in her original from whereas Narsimha came in body form of Nasrimhi, bringing down the constellations by the toss of her mane.

Devi Kaushiki, Devi Mahatamya, Kangra, Ms. illustration, A.D. 1890-1905
M.C. Uppal and S.C. Uppal Collection, Kangra

The thousand eyed Aindri appeared riding the Airavata holding thunderbolt (Bajra) as if Indra (Shakra) himself had been in presence. Lord Shiva, surrounded by those Shaktis of the devas said to Chandika, "Let the asuras be killed forthwith by you for my gratification. And, here, now appeared from the body of Devi the Shakti Chandika, most terrific, fierce in extremes and uttered the yell of a hundred jackals pronouncing death. The invincible Devi Chandika told Shiva, who had dark braids of hair in matted locks (Dumrajatila) to go as ambassador to the presence of Shumbha and Nishumbha to tell the haughty duo and others assembled for battle. Her words "Let Indra obtain the three worlds and let the devas enjoy their sacrificial oblations and you retire to the Patala, the nether world for your lives. But if through pride of strength you are keen for battle, come on then. Let my jackals be satiated with your flesh." The Devi by appointing Shiva as 'duta', the ambassador became renowned as 'Shiva-duti'. 15-28.

Devi's message reached through Shiva filled the asuras with indignation and they advanced towards Devi Katyayani, the Chandika and in enraged spirits showered arrows, javelins and spears on the Devi which met their doom facing lightly drawn huge arrow shots from Chandika's full-drawn bow and reducing their attack to no force as cloved by her weapons. 29-31.

Kali stalked in front of Shumbha, piercing the asuras to pieces with her spear and crushed them with her skull-topped staff.

Brahmani from her Kamandalu sprinkled water on the asuras and made them bereft of valour and prowess.

Maheshwari slew the asuras with her trident and Vaishnavi with her discus. Kumari used her javelin to silence the enemy to death.

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Thunderbolt, the Bajra used by Aindri tore to pieces the hordes of enemy army where the daityas, the demons and danavnas, the giants fell on earth in hundreds, streams of blood flowing out of them. Varahi shattered them with blows of her snout, wounded many in their chests by the point of her tusk and killed a few torn by her discus. Narsimhi filled the three worlds, with her roars, roamed around in the battlefield using her claws to tear a many and devouring them forthwith. The great Devi, Shivaduti's valour and gallant deeds demoralised the enemy with her violent laughter and the enemy fell down on earth, she devoured the ones fallen in fear. The devis combined as 'Matri Shakti" crushed the asuras and this made the asura troops desert the battlefield; showing their backs they took to their heels. 32-39.

Devi Kamla, Devi Mahatamya, Kangra, Ms. illustration, A.D. 1890-1905
M.C. Uppal and S.C. Uppal Collection, Kangra

Seeing the asuras in trouble and noticing the fleeing armies put to shameful defeat at the hands of the mother goddesses asura Raktabija in wrath strode forward to fight. This asura gave birth to fully grown other asuras from the drops of his blood whenever it fell to the ground from any wounds of his. The multiplied asuras fought. Raktabija's first fight with Indra's Sakti resulted in his getting hurt. With her club, Aindri, the goddess struck him with her thunderbolt. Blood flowed profusely from his body and from his blood rose up fresh combatants of his form and power. Each drop gave birth to a new being matching his valour, strength and courage and these forces fought in a very dreadful manner with their formidable weapons. Struck by thunderbolt again, his blood flowed and from this arose asuras in thousands. Devi Vaishnavi hit him with her discus and Aindri used her club to strike him which resulted in the world pervading by thousands of great asuras as clones of their source, his stature and valour. Devi Kumari struck Raktabija with her spear, Varahi with her sword and Maheshvari with her trident yielding to asura power growing beyond proportions and the great demon in wrath himself attacked the mother goddess with his club resulting in streams of blood falling on earth from his multiple wounds, new asuras were born. He the blessed one had a boon that each drop of his blood if fell on ground will change into a form of his own and this happened when he got hit by spears, darts and other weapons used by the Devi which alarmed the devas and filled them with dejection. Now Chandika laughed and said to Kali, 'O Chamunda, open out your mouth wide, with your mouth quickly take the drops of blood generated by the blow of my weapon and also devour the asuras born of the drops of blood of Raktabija. Move about in the battlefield, devouring the great asuras that spring from his blood. With blood emptied from his body, the asura will perish

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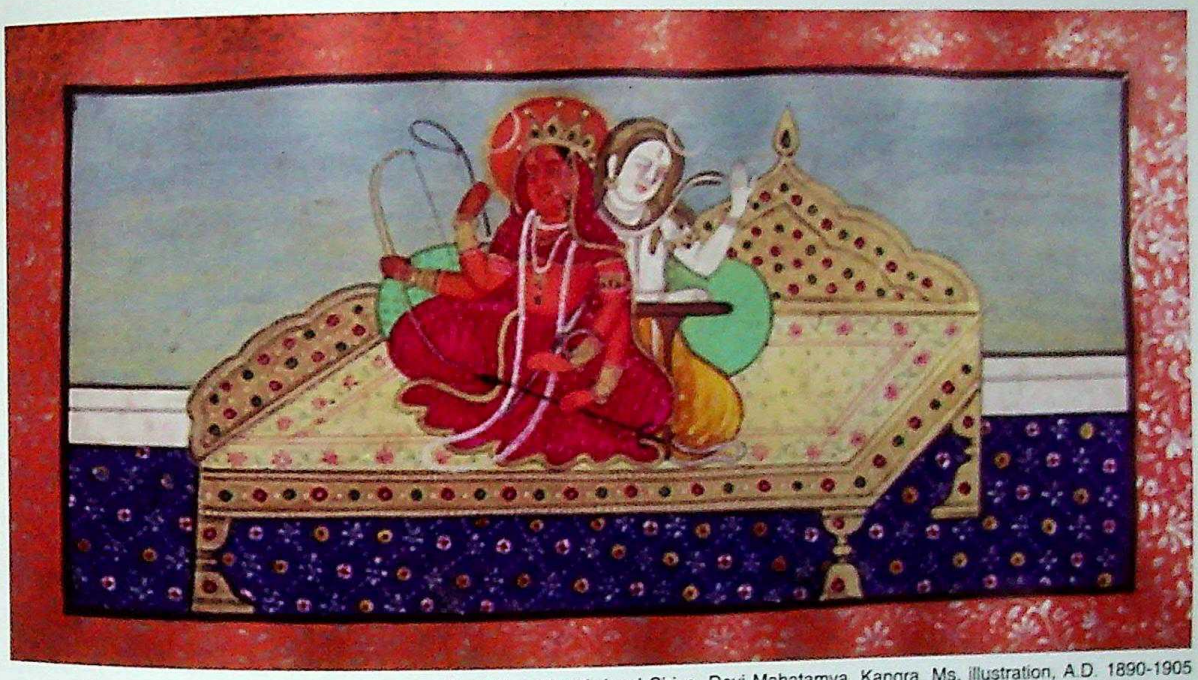
and your action will not permit new asura's to take form', the two Devis planned their action and the asura was hit by Chandika with her dart. Kali drank Raktabija's blood with her open mouth. The asura hit the Devi with his club but she felt not even the slighest pain. The fight continued and the copious blood oozing out of asura's body was consumed by Kali, the Chamunda along with any asuras born of drops of blood fallen on the ground. Most of his blood having dried out, the Devi Kausiki smote Raktabija with her dart, thunderbolt, arrows, swords and spears while Chamunda, the Kali continued drinking his blood. Stricken with so many divine weapons and now bloodless, the great asura fell on the ground to death. 32-62.



Devi Parvati with Lord Shiva, Devi Mahatamya, Kangra, Ms. illustration, A.D. 1890-1905
M.C. Uppal and S.C. Uppal Collection, Kangra

Raktabija's end gave great joy to the devas. The goddess mothers who sprang from the devas, now danced being intoxicated with consumed blood of Raktabija. 63.

End of Chapter VIII 'The slaying of Raktabija, Devi Mahatamya, Markandeya Purana.'

Hearing the details of the Markandeya Purana from the great sage, King Suratha said, 'This tale is wonderful fact given by you, the most revered Rishi, Sir, greatness of the Devi's action slaying Raktabija's ending, I wish to hear the truth, further about the actions of irate Shumbha and Nishumbha.'

The Rishi said, 'Raktabija's death caused unbounded wrath that filled Shumbha and Nishumbha with designs to attack the Devi resulting in Nishumbha himself rushing forward with his major armed forces of the asuras. The asuras full of anger, enraged, biting their lips in revenge advanced to take Devi to task. Shumbha too, in all his might advanced with his troops to slay Chandika and other mother goddesses. 1 – 8.

Severe battles followed. Both sides in combat saw Shumbha and Nishumbha appearing like thunder-clouds, raining a most furious and tempestuous shower of arrows on her. Chandika's arrow split the asura weapons and smote the two giants on their limbs with her multiple divine weapons. Nishumbha attacked the lion of Devi with a sharp sword and a shining shield on its head but the Devi cut asura's blessed sword with a sharp-edged arrow and also his shield which had eight moons figured on it, in time, saving her mount the lion. Asura's sword broken

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and shield ineffective followed his attack by spear, but this missile also was cut to pieces by the discus that the Devi threw on the asura who now in great wrath sent a dart to hit the Devi which met the end by Devi's fist. Followed this attack with his club brandished, he flung the weapon against Chandika but the Devi turned it to ashes by the use of her trident. The Devi who assailed the brave 'danava' advancing with his battle-axe in hand, laid him low on the ground. Seeing Nishumbha's fall Shumbha in rage infuriated in the extreme, strode ahead to kill Ambika. 9–17.

Shumbha stood on his chariot holding great weapons in his long and incomparable eight arms and appeared pervading to entire space and sky. Devi noticed him approaching to attack her and blew her conch to indicate

Devi Parvati and Lord Shiva, Devi Mahatamya, Kangra, Ms. illustration, A.D. 1890-1905
M.C. Uppal and S.C. Uppal Collection, Kangra

the beginning of a battle. The twang of her bowstring was deafening in extreme. The Devi rang her bell which was enough to destroy the strength of demons. Her lion filled the heaven and earth and all the sky with its loud roars and the thundering echo made the enemy elephants give up their violent rut. Goddess Kali seeing all set to blast springing upwards in the sky alighted on ground and struck the earth with her hands causing noise which drowned all previous noises and sounds. Devi Shivaduti laughed a loud ominous peal of laughter frightening the asuras and enraging Shambhu gravely 18 – 23.

The Devi Ambika addressed the demon and told him to stop his evil natured evil acts. This gave happiness to all the devas in the sky and they blessed the Devi with the boon, 'Be victorious'. Devi with a fiery weapon stopped the hurled spear by Shumbha which was flaming most terribly and shining like a ball of fire. The space, all around the three worlds was pervaded by the demon's lion-like roar which turned dim and smothered before the dreadedful thunder-clap of the Devi. Shumbha's arrow attack was defeated in split of arrows caused by the counter attack by the Devi. Ultimately Ambika smote the Giant with a trident, wounding him severely and resulting in his falling on the ground and fainting. Shortly on regaining consciousness, he seized his bow and showered Devi Chandika with arrows, the Kali and the lion. The clever demon who was born to Diti, put forth a myriadarm, covered Chandika with his myriad discuses. Devi, the goddess Durga, the destroyer of all hindrances and afflictions, in her anger retaliated with arrows from her bow and made the attack ineffective. Not deterred

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by Devi's swift attack the demon, Nishumbha, surrounded by the demon host used his club and rushed to slay the Devi. At this stage, in swift action, Chandika clove his club with her sharp-edged sword; but the demon made a dart attack which the Devi noticed and she pierced him in the heart with her dart sent in lightning speed. Nishumbha's heart pierced, gave out birth in form of a person, strong, great in valour shouting at the Devi to stop her attack. But the Devi roared in laughter, severed the head from his body with her sword showing him dust. Devi's lion ate up those asuras who were crushed on their necks by his fierce teeth. The other demons, danavas, daityas and giants were eaten up and devoured by Kali and Shivaduti. Many great asuras perished on being pierced through the spear of Devi Kumari and the few left were repulsed by water sprinkled from her

Devi Chaumunda, Devi Mahatamya, Kangra, Ms. illustration, A.D. 1890-1905
M.C. Uppal and S.C. Uppal Collection, Kangra

Kamandlu by the incantation of Brahmani. A few died being pierced by the Trident of Maheshvari and the remaining chosen ones were powdered on the ground by the blows from the snout of Varahi. Vaishavi used her discus to bring to pieces the others whereas Aindri from her palm discharged the thunderbolt to finish off what remained of asura forces. Some asuras perished in fear, some fled to life and the end of battle came in Kali, Shivaduti and the lion devouring the others who lived to attain moksha. 24-41

CHAPTER IX, 'The slaying of Nishumbha, Devi Matamya, Markandeya Purana'

The Rishi said : Shumbha saw his dear brother Nishumbha slain and his army being slaughtered and in anger he addressed the Devi saying 'O Durga, you are puffed up with the pride of your strength but it has no importance to me. Though you are exceedingly haughty, you resorting to the strength of others, fight. At this the Devi retorted that she was all alone in the world and no one else is supporting her. She added further stating to the vile one that the Goddesses seen were only her forms and powers entering into her ownself. At the utterance of these words all forms of the devis were absorbed in her body and she was Ambika alone on the battlefield. She turned to the demon and said, "The numerous forms which I projected by my power here, those I are withdrawn by me, and now I stand alone. Be steadfast in combat". This followed a dreadful battle

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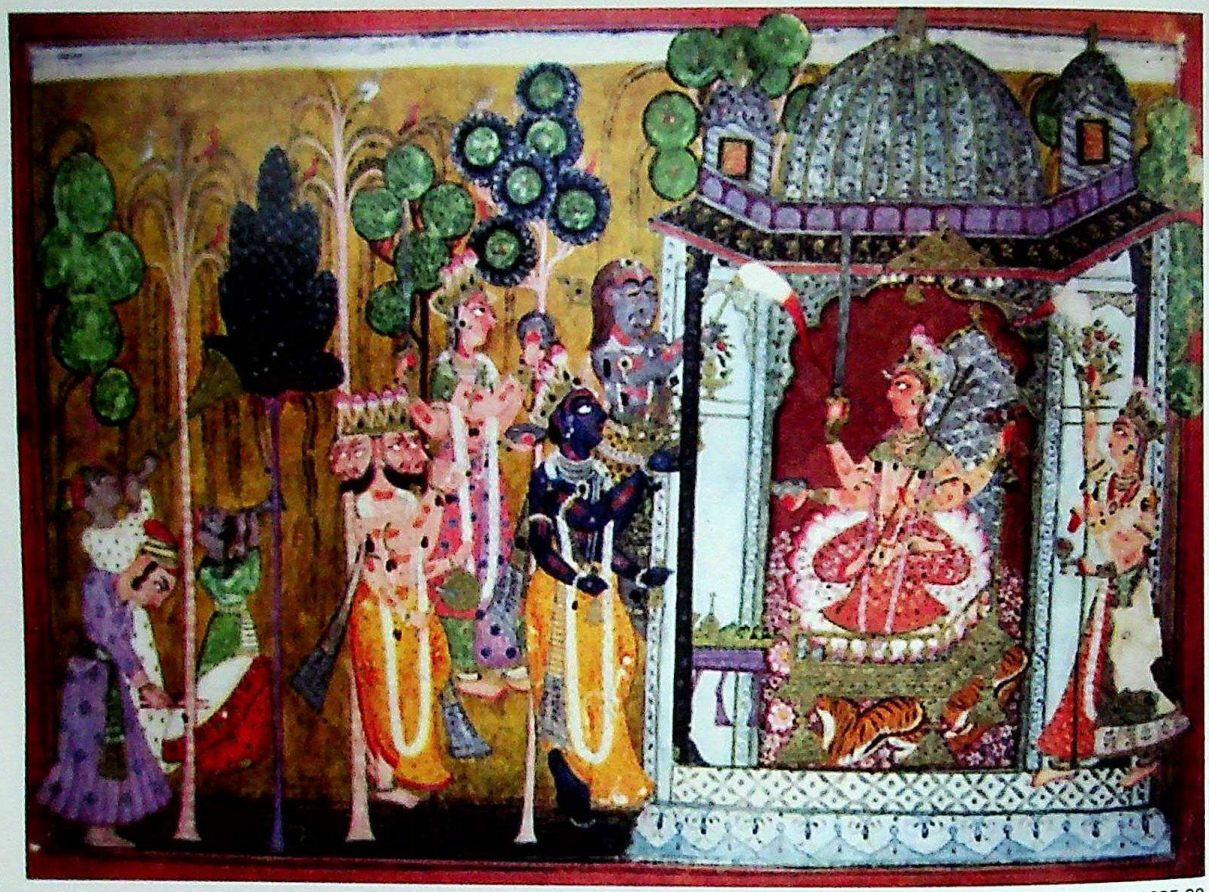
between the two while all the asuras and devas looked on. The combat resulted in showers of arrows, sharp weapons and frightful missiles and put the three worlds to fright. Ambika's missiles were destroyed by the warrior demon with his powerful weapons and the Devi Parmeshvari playfully turned to pieces whatever the Giant discharged as weapons. Devi was covered with hundreds of arrows which she, in wrath split and also shattered his bow. 1–14.

Now the lord of demons switched to his spear which the Devi cut to pieces with her discus. The Giant now



Worship of the Devi by Gods, Basohli, A.D. 1685-90

fought with the sparkling sword, as bright as the sun and shining shield bearing the insignia of a hundred moons and rushed at the Devi, who as Chandika split his sword with her sharp arrows shot from her bow, as also his shield which had the sparkle of the solar rays. With his steeds slain, bow broken, charioteer killed, the demon decided to use his mace to kill Ambika, the divine mother. The Devi destroyed the mace but the demon continued to speed, raising his fist, rushing swiftly at the Devi and hit her on her heart with a blow. Devi paid him back with her palm smoting him on his chest, wounding him gravely, he fell on the earth but rose again and succeeded in holding the Devi and surprised her with his flight mounting on high into the sky. Chandika needed no support in fighting in the air. The terrible air-combat was unparrallel, never seen before and the two fought tooth and nail on close-quarter battle as dog-fight of flying beings which surprised the divines and sages. After tiring the demon in long-houred battle, the Devi lifted the Demon-Lord, whirled him around and flung him down on the earth. 15–24.

Flung to the ground the evil-hearted Shumbha collected himself, raising his first, he hastily rushed forward with a resolve to kill the Devi but his approach met with Devi's dart attack piercing him on the chest and he was made to fall on the ground lifeless, shaking the entire earth with his weight, its seas, islands and mountains. 25–27

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Devi Aindari, Devi Mahatamya, Kangra, Ms. illustration, A.D. 1890-1905
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Devi Gauri, Devi Mahatamya, Kangra, Ms. illustration, A.D. 1890-1905
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Devi Vaishnavi, Devi Mahatamya, Kangra, Ms. illustration, A.D. 1890-1905
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Devi Durga Enthroned, Devi Mahatamya, Kangra, Ms. illustration, A.D. 1890-1905
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The end of the asura gave the universe all happiness and peace perfect prevailed everywhere freeing the hazed sky to brightness spread. The flamming portent-shades that were witnessed before became tranquil, the rivers limited themselves to their courses. His death gave peace to the devas who were overjoyed in their hearts and the Gandharvas sang sweetly. The divines and their minstrels sounded their instruments and the bands of

Manuscript illustration, Devi Matamya, Nandikeshwra Purana
Kangra Art Museum, Dharamsala

nymphs danced in joy; winds in all directions became favourable and the sun gave its brilliant rays; the sacred fires of yajanas blazed peacefully and tranquil becme the environment with peace returning to all. 28-32.

End of Chapter X, 'The slaying of Shumbha, Devi Mahatamya, Markandeya–purana'.

The Rishi said : After the Lord of asuras was slain by the Devi, Lord Indra and other divines led by Agni, with their object attained, appeared with their cheerful faces spreading divine light all around and praised the Devi Katayayani in words matching her divinity. They said, "O Devi, you who removes the suffering of your suppliants, be gracious. Be propitions, O mother of the whole world. Be gracious, O Mother of the universe. Protect the universe. You are, O Devi, the ruler of all that is animate and inanimate. You are the sole substratum of the world, because you subsist in the form of the earth. Your existence in the shape of water gratifies the universe. You are Devi of inviolable valour! You are the power of Vishnu (There is an eulogy with reference to Katayayani in the Lakshmi Tantra – Lakshmi instructs Lord Indra the wonderful results of chanting it.) and have endless valour. You are the primeaval 'Maya' which' is the source of universe. All illusion seen is because of your 'Maya'. When you are gracious, you lead all to final emancipation in this world." 1-5.

All lores of known and unknown are your aspects; so are all women in the whole world, you O Devi are provider of various attributes as your endowment to the female world and it is only you who are seen as manifest world. You are the nature of primary and secondary expression regarding objects worthy of praise,

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indeed, you are beyond any praise in words! As Devi, the effulgent one you have been lauded as the embodiment of all beings and bestower of enjoyment and liberation. O' Devi Narayini we bow to you in respect because you abide as intelligence in the minds of all creatures, what words have we to praise you! Our respectful salute to you O Narayani for you, who in the form of time-space, moments and other known divides of time, brings about change in matter and are all powerful to destroy the universe. I pray to you for you alone have power of creation, sustentation and destruction and are eternal. You are the substratum and embodinent of the three gunas. (merits) You aim at saving the dejected and the distressed when they come to you because only you, O Devi would remove the suffering of all. To you is our Namaskara. 6–12.

Devi Kumari, Devi Mahatamya, Kangra, Ms. illustration, A.D. 1890-1905
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O Narayani, salutation to you who ride in the heavenly chariot yoked, with swans when you appear in the form of Brahmani sprinkling water with kusha grass. As Maheshwari you who bear the trident, the moon and the serpent and ride a big bull, you are Narayani of our salutations in that from too. As Kumari you are sinless and appear attended by peacock and other cock-birds, holding spear, we salute your this form. In your Vaishnavi from, O gracious one, O you Narayani, you hold the conch, discus, club and bow, we salute you in worship. You appear in boarlike form holding a huge terrifying discus and uplift the globe with your tusk, we solute you O auspicious Devi. You in the form of Narsimhi (man lion) appear fierce and put forth your efforts to destroy the asuras. You possess the benevolence of protecting the Trilokas, the three known worlds. We salute you in prayer. 13–18.

Our salutation be to you, Oh Devi Narayani, you have a diadem and a mahabajra. Dazzling with a thousand eyes and as slayer of Baritra, you appear as Aindri! Salutation be to you O Narayani, who in the form of Shivaduti slew the mighty army of demons in your terrible form and thundering throat voice. O Chamunda slayer of Munda, O Narayani salutation be to you who have a face horrible with tusks terrifying and are adorned with a garland of heads. You Narayani who are good fortune, modesty, great wisdom, faith, nourishment, Svadha, dharuva, maharatri and mahaavidya form, salutation be to you. (The Devi is immovable too, she is the eternal night of rest and darkness and also great illusion)

Devi is Sarswati, Medha, Shareshtha, Aishwaryarupa, Parvati, Mahakali, Sanyama prayani and all pervading. Salutation be to you O Narayani. Narayani is Durga, the Queen of all, O Devi you exist in form of all, and

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possess every might, save us from mistakes, salutation be to you. O Katyayani may this benign countenance of yours adorned with three eyes, protect us from all worldly fears, salutation be to you. 19 – 25.

Salutation be to you, O Devi Bhadrakali, terrible with flames, extraordinarily sharp, destroyer of all asuras, may your trident guard us from fear and weakness.

O Devi, may your bell that echos in the whole universe when ringing and destroys the powers of demons,

Devi Vaishnavi, Devi Mahatamya, Kangra, Ms. illustration, A.D. 1890-1905
M.C. Uppal and S.C. Uppal Collection, Kangra

guard us from all evils as mother for we are your children. Mother, we bow to you for you are Chandika who have sword smeard with mirelike blood and fat of demons, and gleaming with rays, you be for our welfare.

When pleased, you destroy all illness; but while in wrath you frustrate all desired boons. O Devi, those who have sought you no calamity befalls them and they become verily a source for others to lean upon. 26-29

O Devi, Ambika multiplying your own from into many, you slaughtered the ill in the world that prevailed in the form of demons who hated righteousness. No one else could have done this. You are science and scriptures and you live in Vedic cantos that light the darkness of ignorance sourced, you also give birth to the universe which takes shape again and again within the dense darkness of the unfathomable depths of attachments and it is you and only you, there in the mid-sea, standing and saving the world where demons and snakes of virulent poison exist and foes and masses of robbers survive, where forest conflagrations occur. You rule the world and the universe and protect the whole. You are self of the universe, support of all existence. You are the divine worthy to be adorned by the Lord of the universe. Your worship can make the worshipper a refuge to the universe. We pray to you O Devi, be pleased and save us with your protection to us ever from fear of foes in the manner you have shown in respect of the asuras. We approach you to request you to instantly destroy the sins of the three worlds and contain calamities which have sprung from the maturing of evil portents. 30– 34.

We bow to the Devi, O you, who removes the afflictions of the universe, be gracious to us, your devotees, because you are worthy of adoration by those dwelling in three worlds, be boon-giver to the worlds'. On

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prayers in unison by the devas the Devi said; 'O Devas, I am prepared to bestow a boon. Choose whatever boon you desire in your mind, for the welfare of the world. I shall grant it, 'The Devas asked the Devi, the Supreme one, to keep destroying all their foes and all other afflictions of the three worlds in the manner she has just done by quelling asuras. The Devi predicted that in the 28th age of the period of Vaivastava Manu, two other giant asuras, Shumbha and Nishaumbha will be born and then born form the womb of Yashoda, in the home of cowhered Nanda, and dwellings on the Vindhya mountains; I shall destroy them both and again when having incarnated in a very formidable form on the earth, shall slay the demons who are the descendants of Piprachitti and by devouring the fierce giants, my teeth shall become red like the flower of pomegranate after

Devi Durga Sharavani, Devi Mahatamya, Kangra, Ms. illustration, A.D. 1890-1905
M.C. Uppal and S.C. Uppal Collection, Kangra

which the devas in heaven, men, on earth will praise me by the name of 'Raktadanta' or the 'red toothed' Devi I will be reborn on the drought-ridden earth as a hundred-eyed Devi when the rain will fail for a hundred years, propitiated by the Munis (Saints living with their families) and behold these saints with a hundred eyes. I shall sustain the world with life-sustaining vegetables born out of my own cosmic body till the rains please the earth again and my form will be called Shakambhri and this will result in my killing demon Durga and I will be regarded by the name Durga Devi. In this form I will assume terrible from on the Himalayas and protect the Munis by killing the demons. Praised by all the Munis with their bodies prostrate at my feet, I shall be known as Bhima devi. At a time an asura by the name Aruna will play havoc in the three worlds, I will form myself in collective bee-cluster, slay him and shall be remembered as Bhramari. Thereafter whenever the evil arises due to demons and giants, asuras, diatyas and danavas, I shall incarnate and destroy the foes. 35–55.

End of XI Chapter. 'Hymn to Narayani, Devi Mahatamya, Markandeya–Purana.'

The Devi said to the Devas, whoever shall pray to me with a concentrated will with these hymns I shall without doubt relieve him of his every trouble. Those who laud and appreciate the story of the destruction of Madhu and Kaitabha, the slaughter of Mahishasura and the slaying of Shumbha and Nishumbha will also be under my protection. Anyone who shall listen with devotion to my, this Mahatamaya epic, the sublime poem on the 8th, 14th and on the 9th day of the each fortnight of the month with devoted heart, to him no wrong shall

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happen, nor any calamity born of wrong doings, nor poverty and separation from dear ones will ever touch. He shall not have fear from enemy or from robbers and the unjust kings, or from weapons, fire or flood. Therefore this epic of my importance, ıe Mahatamya about me must be chanted by devotionally dedicated men and listened to always with devotional surrender; for it leads to the supreme course of well-being. May this Mahatamya of my glories quell all epidemic calamities as also the threefold natural calamities. 1-8

I shall never desert the temple or station of my sanctuary where this poem is duly chanted daily. My presence is certain at such places. During the process of my worship any sacrifices offered, yajna is held with

Devi Gaja Laxmi, Devi Mahatamya, Kangra, Ms. illustration, A.D. 1890-1905
M.C. Uppal and S.C. Uppal Collection, Kangra

fire lit and at a great festival held, complete poem on my acts must be chanted and heard. During autumn, when the great worship (Mahapooja) is performed the person hearing this Mahatamya (glorification) of mine with devotion shall sure, through my grace will get away from all troubles and problems and be blessed with riches, gains and sons (children). 9.13

At the time of battles, hearing this glorification and auspicious appearance of mine and my feats of process, makes a man fearless. Let one listen to this Mahatamya of mine everywhere, at a propitiatory ceremony, on seeing a bad dream or at the time when there is the great evil influence of planets. The evil portents will subside, adverse influence of the planets and the effect of bad dreams seen by men will turn into all good and favourable. The children possessed by evil spirits will get peace. During split and difference of heart, it brings a change and promotes friendship and union occurs in men. This Mahatamya of mine draws a devotee very near to me. It diminishes most effectively the power of all men of evil ways. Verily demons, goblins and ogres (Bhuta-pisachas) are destroyed, by its mere recitation. 14-19

For coming closer to me men may involve in sacrifices and acts in offerings of finest cattle, flowers, arghya and incenses, and of perfumes and lamps, providing food to Brahmins etc; and as also I am attained by ablations by sprinkling consecrated water, and by various other offerings and gifts day and night during my worship, the year over, the gratification which is done to me, is attained by listening even once to this holy story

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of mine. The chantings and hearing of this epic tale of my manifestations removes sins, grants perfect health and protects one from evil spirits, and when my martial exploit in the form of the slaughter of wicked demons is listened to, men will have no fear from their foe. These hymns chanted by ordinary people, a sage divine or a Brahimin bestow a pious mind. One who is lost in lonely forest, or is surrounded by forest fire or seized by robbers in a desolate spot, or one who is captured by enemies or who is pursued by a lion, or tiger or the wild elephants in a forest, or who under the orders of a wrathful king is sentenced to death, unjustly, or has been imprisoned or is in turmoil in his boat due to a tempest in the endless seas, or who is in the amidst of most fierce

Devi Brahmani with Devi Kali, Devi Mahatamya, Kangra, Ms. illustration, A.D. 1890-1905
M.C. Uppal and S.C. Uppal Collection, Kangra

battle under shower of weapons or who is seized by all kinds of dreadful troubles or who is afflicted with pain, such a person on remembering this story of mine is saved from his strait. Through my power, beasts, robbers and hostile enemies flee from a distance from him who remembers this epic lore of mine. 20-30

The Rishi said, 'Having spoken thus the adorable Chandika, fierce in prowess vanished on that very spot even as the devas were gazing on. Their foe slaughtered, all the divines were without fear. They resumed their normal duties and participated in their rituals and sacrifices. After the death of Shumbha and Nishumbha, the fieree most foes of the divines who also brought havoc and ruin to human beings, the leftover among the demons went away to the their world, the patala. 31-35

Rishi said to the King : the adorable, most revered Devi, although eternal, incarnating invariably ever, protects the world. She deludes the Universe and also creates it on being entreated, she is the bestower of supreme knowledge, and as also prosperity on being propitiated. She in her Mahakali form is great destroyer and pervades the cosmic sphere. She is unborn and is also the creation herself at the desired moment. She is the eternal being and also at different moments she sustains other beings. In prosperity she is Lakshmi, the bestower of prosperity in the homes of men. In times of misfortune and disaster, herself becoming the goddess of misfortune, she causes the downfall. When praised and worshipped with flowers, incense, perfumes etc. she bewtows wealth and sons and also guides our mind to attain righteousness and all prosperous in life. 36-41

End of chapter XII 'Eulogy of the merits, Devi Mahatamya, Markandeya-purana'

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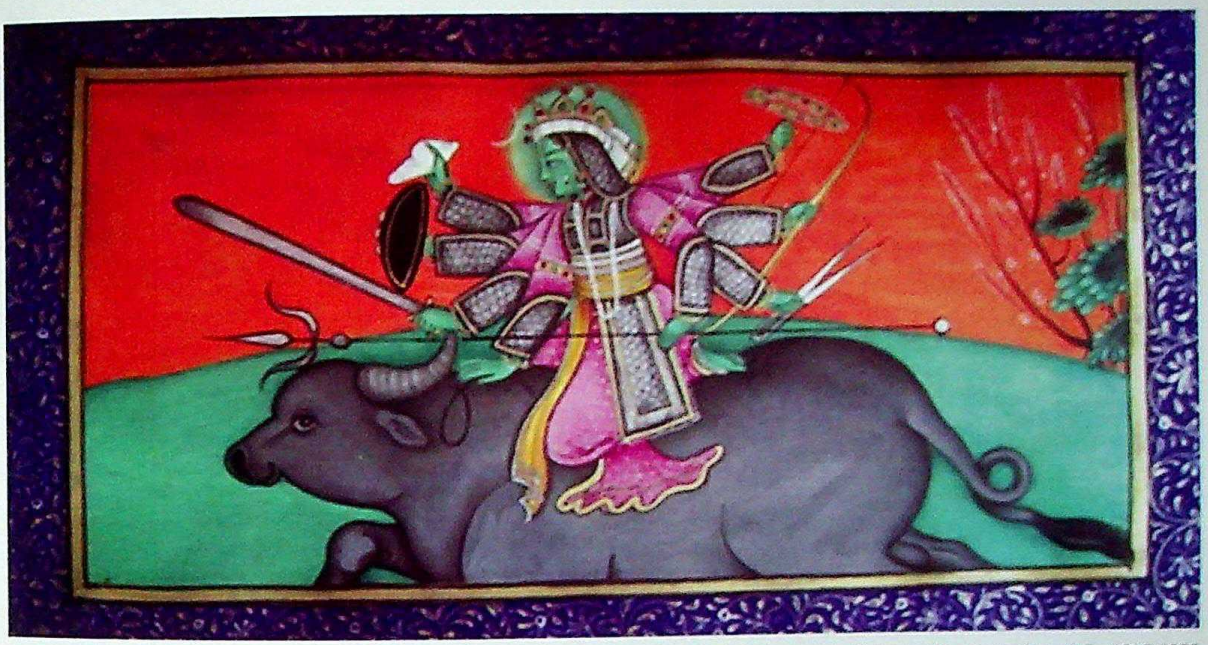
The Rishi said, 'O King I have told the Devi Mahatamya, the sublime poem to you. The Devi upholds this world. She is endowed with majestic worth: power. She is the cause of knowledge which she bestows on us all. She is the illusive power of God Vishnu. You O King and this merchant friend of yours and other men of intellect and discrimination are deluded, she has done it ever before and will do so in future too, hence you must take refuge in her, the supreme goddess. She, when worshipped, bestows on men enjoyment, heaven and emancipation from the cycle of transmigrations. 1-5



Devi Maheshawari, Devi Mahatamya, Kangra, Ms. illustration, A.D. 1890-1905
M.C. Uppal and S.C. Uppal Collection, Kangra

Markandeya, the great sage said to his follower Bhaguri: King Suratha heard the Devi Mahatamya from Medhamuni and bowed to him in praise for the illustrious one who was purifired with severe penances and performance of austerities for showing him a new way to life at the time he had become dependent due to his excessive attachment and distressed deprivation of his Kingdom. Both King and the merchant with an ambition to obtain vision of the great goddess, Amba, stayed on the sand-bank of the river to practise penance chanting the Devi Mahatamya Sukta (hymn). They made an image in clay of the Devi on the river bed and worshipped her with all the ingredients like flowers, incense, fire and libation of water. They kept their fasts and restrained from cereal intake, offered sacrifices sprinkled with blood drawn from their own bodies. For three years they propitiated her and the result was Chandika the upholder of the Universe with all its world, was well pleased with their penance and she appeared in visible form with the words, "O King, what you solicit, and you the delight of your family receive all that from me. Well-pleased I bestow those to you both." 6-15

Markandeya said, the King asked for an imperishable kingdom in this life and life after this as his own kingdom where in the power of his enemies is destroyed by force. The merchant with his mind full of dispassion for the world chose the boon of knowledge which brings an end to all vanity and ego, of 'mine' or 'I' and free himself from all worldly attachments. 16-19

The Devi said, " O King, soon you will slay your enemies and regain your kingdom for ever and after your this life ends you shall be reborn from the lord Sun (Vivasvat Deva) and shall be a Manu on earth by name Savarni." To the merchant she said, "O the best of merchants, I grant you your two boons as each desired of

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me, supreme knowledge and your self-realization both."

Markandeya, the great sage said, "The Devi disappearred after granting them both the boons each desired while the two were extolling her with devotion and utter dedication. Having gained the boon from the Devi, King Suratha, the leader of Kashatriya, shall obtain a new birth through Surya and his wife Savarna and shall be the eighth Manu named Savarni. Savarnirbhvita Manu. Kaleenga Om. (Kaleenga Om is a prayer)

End of chapter XIII 'The bestowing of boons to Suratha and Vaishya, Devi Mahatamya, Markandeya Purana, during the period of Savarni, the Eighth Manu.

King Surtha and Merchant Samadhi worshiping Devi Mahagauri, Devi Mahatamya Guler, A.D. 1780-85
Bharat Kala Bhavan, Varanasi

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Devi Kumari, Devi Mahatamya, Kangra, A.D. 1574-75
Himachal State Museum, Shimla

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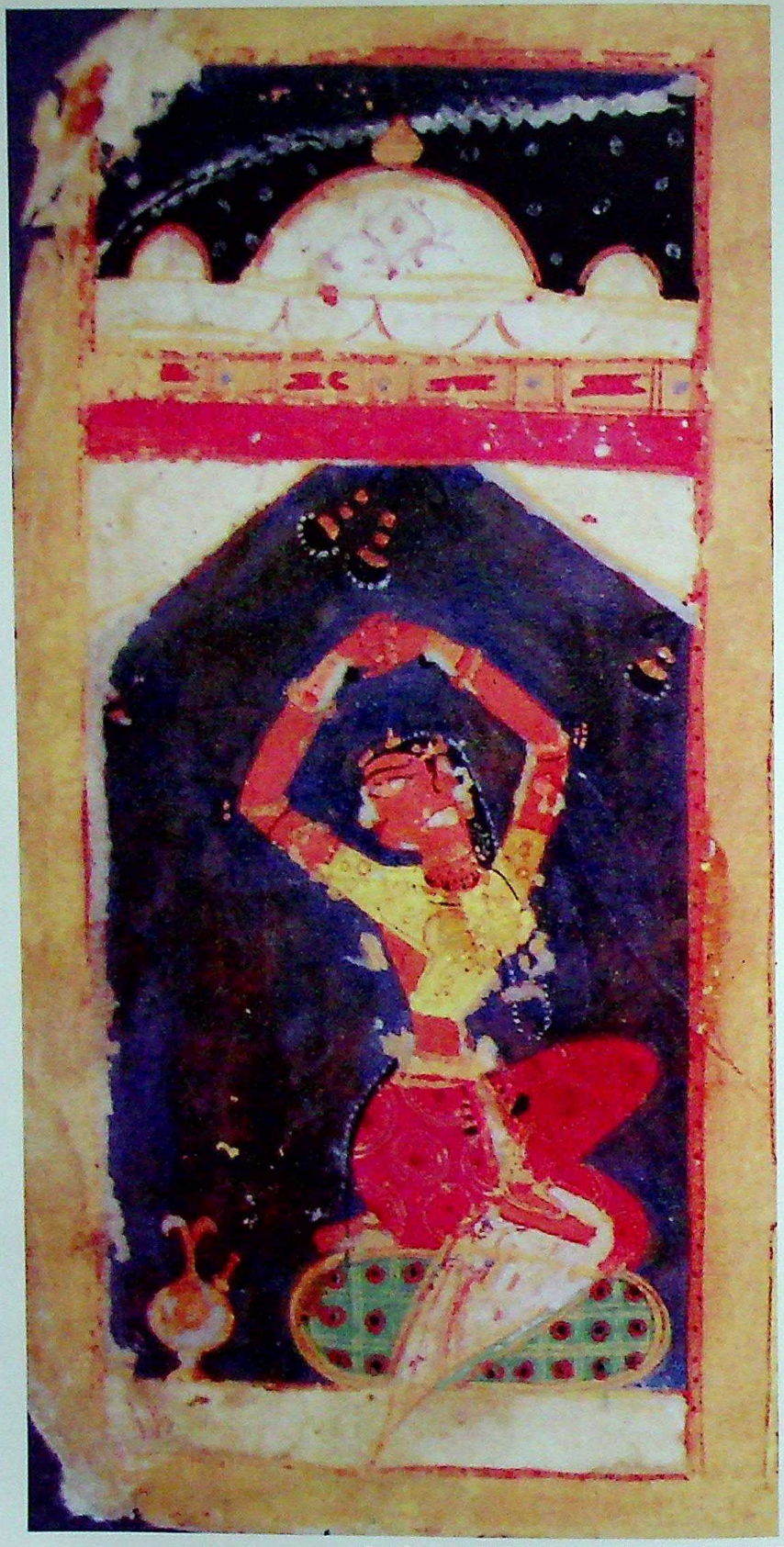

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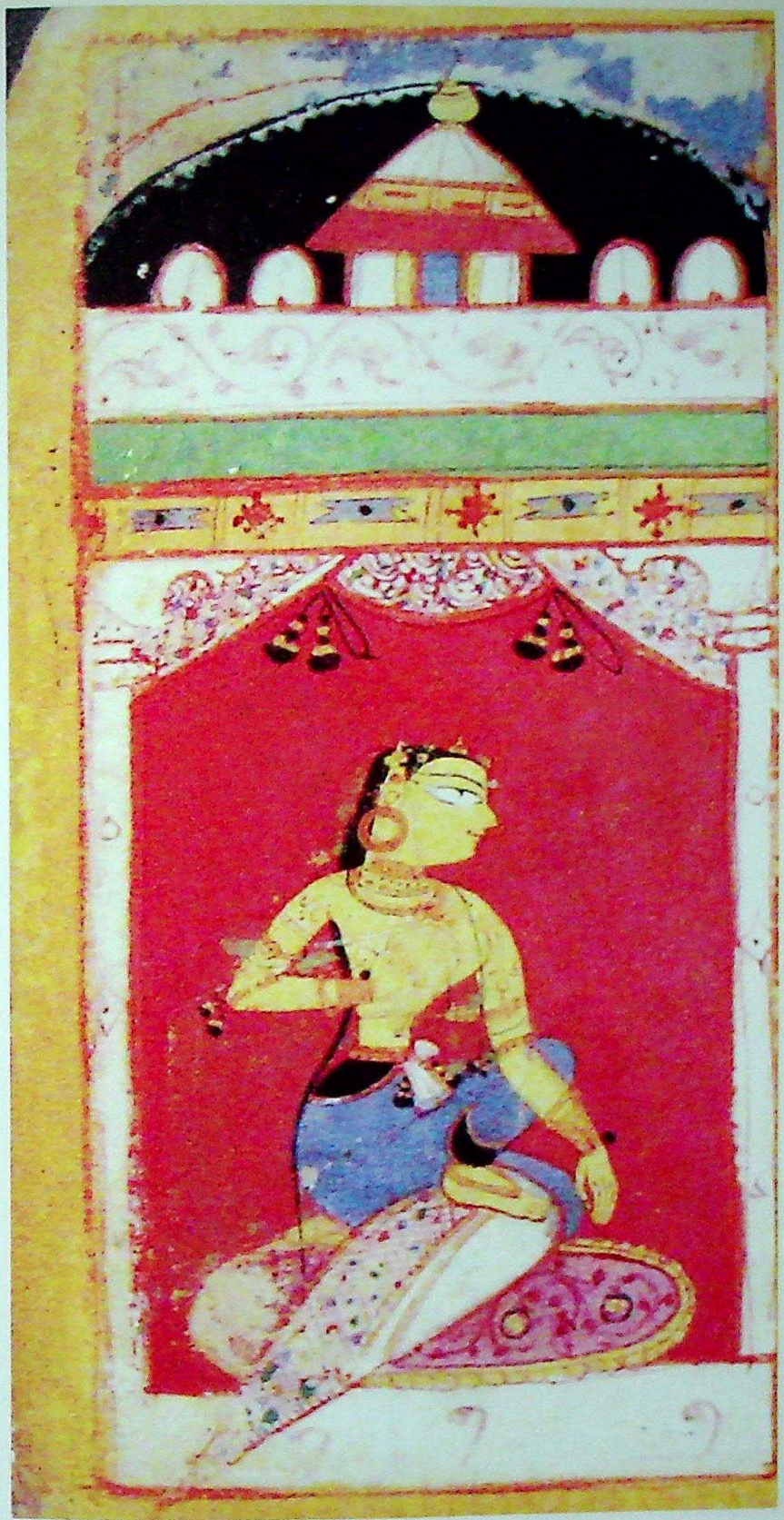

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Mahishasura being attacked by Devi when he appears in human form, Devi Mahatamya, Kangra, A.D. 1574-75
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Novelist, short story writer, poet, linguist, art historian, art critic, painter, sculptor, social scientist, sportsman and a filmmaker, Onkar Chandra Sharma, who writes under the nom de plume Onkar Rahi, was born on 20th, May 1940 in a family of scholars traditionally devoted to the studies of Sanskrit and oriental languages. A combination of sports and scholarship, love for research, astrology, occult, tantra, culture, Vedic studies and social services, makes Mr. Rahi a rare personality in India.

He joined prestigious Indian Police Service at the age of 23 and retired at the top most rank as Director General of Police from Madhya Pradesh.

Mr. Rahi is credited with eight novels in Hindi and one in English, a collection of short stories, two books on linguistics, an anthology of poems and five books on art and sculpture. His famous book 'Khajuraho Unknown', a best seller, has been highly acclaimed in the world of Art. 'The Devi : Shakta Cult' and 'Rasamanjari : The Nectarous Ocean' are his valuable contribution to Pahari Miniature Painting. His edited works include 'Crime Against Women', 'M.P. Police journal', and 'Kangra Annual', an art magazine. His hobbies include collection of rare books, coins, paintings, sculpture and antiques.

Presently, he is settled in his home town, Kangra in Himachal Predesh under the snow clad Western Himalayas and is involved in social and charitable activities in addition to his literary pursuits.

Jacket Design by J.M.S. Rawat

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